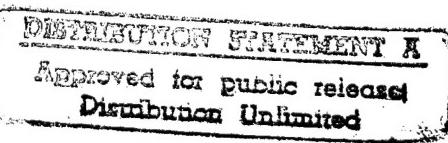
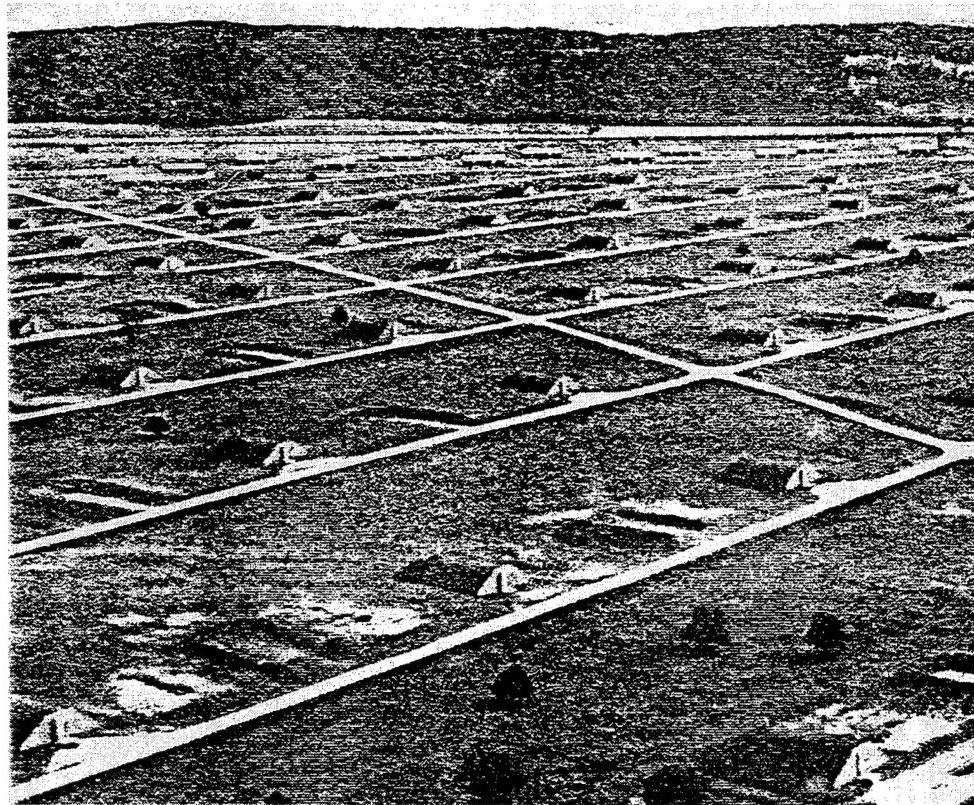


**80 Years of Service**

**Savanna Ordnance Depot**

**in the Defense of Our Nation**

**1916 - 1996**



by

RuthAnne Kunke

Inga Olsen

Ross E. Paulson, Ph.D.



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4 June 1996

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Enclosed is a historical report that was done by two History students of Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. Would you please include this in your data base?

Thank you,



JEAN R. KEAN  
Public Affairs Officer  
Savanna Army Depot Activity  
Savanna, IL 61074-9636  
(815) 273-8701

## Prelude

### The Preparedness Debate, 1914 - 1917

The outbreak of war in Europe in August 1914 contributed to, but did not cause, a long-running debate in the United States over "preparedness," the status of the national defense and the appropriate structure of the military establishment. An amateur military historian and preparedness advocate, Frederic Louis Huidekoper, observed first-hand the military situation in England, France and Germany after the start of hostilities and returned to the United States convinced that drastic measures were necessary. In December 1914, Huidekoper and like-minded public figures formed the National Security League. In five months Huidekoper updated his polemical study called The Military Unpreparedness of the United States: A History of American Land Forces from Colonial Times until June 1, 1915. General Leonard Wood provided a brief introduction with an appropriate comment: "However preparedness is to be brought about, it must be done in time of peace. Not only does this apply to the training of men, but it applies with equal force to the preparation of material, for the weapons of to-day are infinitely more complicated than those of our fathers." With meticulous scrutiny of the testimony by military officials before congressional committees and detailed analysis of appropriation bills and amendments, Huidekoper sought to document that the United States was woefully unprepared, particularly in weapons and munitions, for its own defense let alone for participation in any conflict approaching the scale of the war in Europe.<sup>1</sup>

The fact that Huidekoper and many of the National Security League founders and similar propreparedness advocates were Republicans and eastern industrialists did not escape the notice of leading Democrats in Congress. The official policy of President Woodrow Wilson in regard to the war in Europe was strict neutrality. Besides, since April 1914 the Wilson administration had had its hands full with intervention in the Mexican revolution following the Veracruz incident. The debate over preparedness thus raised sensitive political issues: preparedness for what? preparedness by whom? These questions soon became entangled with another conflict between advocates of a larger Regular Army with a professional general staff and defenders of the state-based National Guard and the tradition of voluntary militia systems. Furthermore, with a presidential election looming in November 1916, President Wilson had to move cautiously so as not to alienate antiwar, proneutrality forces in his own party or to drive voters concerned with preparedness into his opponent's camp. In January 1916 Wilson outlined his views on the European war and American policy toward it. From 27 January to 2 February 1916 Wilson spoke in such cities as New York City; Cleveland, Ohio; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Joliet and Rock Island, Illinois; Davenport, Iowa; and Topeka, Kansas, and reiterated his basic theme: the United States needed military preparedness for defense of the Western Hemisphere and its "international ideals" but not for aggressive war. In March 1916 this carefully crafted policy received a rude shock. Forces of Mexican revolutionary Francisco "Pancho" Villa crossed the border and killed several American

citizens in Columbus, New Mexico. With the reluctant consent of the Mexican government, Wilson promptly sent an expedition of nearly 7,000 troops under General John J. Pershing into Mexico to "punish" Villa.<sup>2</sup>

The Mexican expedition badly strained American military resources, complicated budget limits of the Wilson administration, and contributed to the debate in Congress over national defense policy. Congress passed the National Defense Act in May 1916 and Wilson signed it in June. The compromise legislation provided for an increase in the Regular Army, federal funding and standardization for National Guard training, a reserve officers' training corps, presidential authorization to order production of defense material, and creation of an advisory Council of National Defense. The Secretary of War promptly ordered a survey of all arms and munitions on hand and future needs. It would seem that the "preparedness" issue had been settled in the time honored democratic fashion of public debate, lobbying and political pressure, and legislative (and budgetary) compromise. In the presidential election of November 1916 the Republican candidate, Charles Evans Hughes, tried to avoid alienating either preparedness or neutrality advocates (and antagonized some of both) while Wilson's campaign manager stressed the themes of peace ("He kept us out of war"), defensive preparedness, and progressive social reforms. Wilson won the election by a narrow margin.<sup>3</sup>

But military and diplomatic events abroad and shifting political alignments at home soon put the preparedness issue back on the public agenda. In November 1916 representatives of the National Security League and the American Defense Society formed a new coalition, the Vigilantes, to recruit writers, artists, and editors for a major publicity campaign in favor of a more vigorous preparedness posture. General Leonard Wood testified before congressional committees on defense issues. Wilson's Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker, testified in favor of "anticipatory preparedness" for defensive, not offensive, strategies and the potential need to "conscript manufacturing plants." Wilson's confidential advisor, Edward House, confided in his diary on the basis of conversations with cabinet officials his fears that the military was woefully unprepared. In January 1917 he urged more vigorous preparedness on Wilson, who assured House that "there will be no war."<sup>4</sup>

### Endnotes to Prelude

1. Frederic Louis Huidekoper, The Military Unpreparedness of the United States: A History of American Land Forces from Colonial Times until June 1, 1915 (New York: Macmillan, 1916), vii-ix, xv (quotation by Wood), 473-77, 495-98, and 520-22. Huidekoper had previously published articles on preparedness in 1906 and 1911.
2. Arthur S. Link, Wilson: Confusions and Crises, 1915-1916 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 15-54 and 195-221.
3. Center of Military History, American Military History (Washington, D.C.: United States Army, 1989), 367 and 373; Arthur S. Link, Wilson: Campaigns for Progressivism and Peace, 1916-1917 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 100-03, 106-12, and 160-64.
4. Edward Robb Ellis, Echoes of Distant Thunder: Life in the United States, 1914-1918 (New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, 1975), 242-43; and Woodrow Wilson, The Papers of Woodrow Wilson, ed. Arthur S. Link (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 40:328-29, 238-39, and 409 (quotation).

## Chapter I

### The Building of the Savanna Facilities and Operations in World War I

At first glance the story of the establishment of an Army ordnance facility at Savanna, Illinois seems straight forward. In spite of President Wilson's efforts to mediate peace and maintain a neutral stance between the warring European powers, the United States was drawn into armed conflict when Imperial Germany officially resumed unrestricted submarine warfare on 1 February 1917. The subsequent sinking of six American ships prompted President Wilson to call a special session of Congress. On 2 April 1917 he asked for a declaration of war. After four days of debate, Congress passed the declaration. The Sundry Civil Act, passed by Congress on 12 June 1917, authorized \$1,500,000 for the establishment of a proof-firing facility for ordnance material in the Midwest. The construction of the Savanna facility began in April 1918 and was completed in December. On 26 December 1918 the Savanna Proving Ground officially opened.<sup>1</sup>

The available records, documents and reports in the National Archives, Great Lakes Region, in Chicago, in local newspapers, and in history books, however, show a more complicated and interesting story than this brief outline would indicate. As the Prelude to this study has indicated, the preparedness debate had raised the issue of ordnance modernization and ammunition levels as early as 1914. On 23 December 1914 the Secretary of War had reported that "only 634 completed modern field guns and howitzers" were on hand. A report on 1 January 1915 by the Chief of Ordnance indicated that 743 artillery pieces were on hand or were under manufacture. Preparedness critics claimed that this was too few compared to the European armies and that current ammunition levels for these artillery pieces would last only a few days at the rate such artillery shells were being fired in the European war. The Sundry Civil Act of March 1915 appropriated \$2,090,000 for the manufacture of field artillery and \$2,900,000 for reserve field artillery ammunition. Congress had turned down an amendment to increase these appropriations to \$4,000,000 and \$5,00,000 respectively.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, even before the United States became actively involved in the war, the build up of ordnance equipment and supplies had begun. Under the authority of the National Defense Act of 1916 a survey of all arms and munitions on hand had been initiated. By 7 February 1917 the Army and Navy had drafted mobilization plans. On 19 February 1917 President Wilson had asked all bureau chiefs to report on the condition of the military in their areas of responsibility. A few days later he asked for authority to commandeer manufacturing plants, if necessary.<sup>3</sup> Since the Rock Island Arsenal was one of the primary government owned and operated ordnance manufacturing facilities, it was not surprising that local attention focused on its activities and that rumors abounded. The Bellevue, Iowa, Leader summarized reports in various newspapers on 22 February 1917:

Chicago Herald: Rock Island arsenal enlargement is provided thru liberal appropriations carried in the sundry civil bill reported today to the House [of Representatives] from the committee on appropriations. The arsenal gets a total of \$2,909,100 included in which is \$2,965,000 [sic] for facilities for the manufacture of field artillery material, \$750,000 toward a new field artillery building to cost \$1,250,000 and \$135,000 for a sodium nitrate storage building.

Savanna Times-Journal: The activity that the railroads are taking in the options south of the city is leading many to believe that the officials of the several roads are cooperating with the higher powers, and that the United States is the fellow back of the land option business .... That [the stretch of land] is to be selected as the place for the great munitions plants seems to be assured.

Hanover Journal: We have it on very good authority that it is the United States government which is after the Sand Prairie land and it is said that an option has already been secured on between 11,000 and 12,000 acres lying between the Burlington [railroad] right of way and the Mississippi river. If the deal is consummated, it is quite probably that there may be something doing on the [Sand] Prairie before another year rolls around.

The Bellevue Leader also reported that: "Mr. Sudlow who has been securing the options on the land opposite Bellevue is again in the city" and that the purpose of the options would be known in ten days. It speculated on 1 March 1917 that the real purpose of the land option was to be "a huge rifle range for practice purposes."<sup>4</sup>

But, the issue was not resolved immediately. Politics had intervened. On 25 February 1917 Senate Republicans decided to filibuster appropriations bills to force President Wilson to call a special session. Accordingly, the regular session of Congress ended on 4 March and the outstanding appropriation bills lapsed. Wilson was inaugurated for his second term on 5 March and called Congress into special session, but little was accomplished, except to raise the Army to war strength levels. Wilson issued a call on 21 March for a second special session of Congress to meet on April 2 to consider a declaration of war. The debate on the declaration of war was slowed by a filibuster by seven Senators who were adamantly opposed to American participation in the war.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the United States Army was on orders to build up to war strength by inducting draftees, and to hold National Guard troops returning from the Mexican border or to recall them. Yet the Quartermaster General had no appropriated funds to build cantonments and camps to house them! A patriotic construction executive agreed to build some of them on credit until Congress could pass the appropriations bill.<sup>6</sup>

### Building the Savanna Facility

The funding for the building of the Savanna facility was thus entangled in hasty mobilization plans, in conflicting priorities between the advisory Council of National Defense and the Wilson administration, and in the Congressional backlog of unfinished business from the special sessions. In more normal times the Sundry Civil Act had been approved on 3 March 1915 at the end of the regular session of Congress; in the confusion of war mobilization after the declaration of war, the Sundry Civil Act for 1917, containing the appropriation for the Savanna facility, was not passed until 12 June 1917. Colonel George W. Burr, the commanding officer of the Rock Island Arsenal, received the authority from the Chief of Ordnance on 23 June 1917 to purchase land and to make the necessary arrangements for the construction of the proof-firing facility. A month later, 23 July 1917, Colonel Burr signed a contract with H.E. Curtis of Rock Island to secure options for the purchase of land. Meanwhile, a strike by lumberjacks in the Pacific Northwest in July 1917 threatened to delay military construction of cantonments and camps. Lumber was a scarce item as various construction projects bid against each other. By 15 October 1917 the Army cantonments and camps were completed, and draftees and militia units began to arrive. The troops were ready to be trained. Would the supply system provide them with sufficient uniforms, boots, tents, rifles, and food? Could the ordnance system provide them with the necessary artillery? Could the ammunition and carriages for the new artillery be proof-tested in time?<sup>7</sup>

The location for the Savanna Proving Ground in the Sand Prairie area eight miles northwest of Savanna in Jo Daviess and Carroll counties, was highly desirable for a number of reasons. Railroads such as the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy, the Illinois Central, and the Great Western provided access for moving manufactured items and munitions. The Mississippi River also allowed access for barge traffic. The site was not contiguous to any major urban area; this was an advantage for proof-firing weapons and high explosives. The location was suitable for firing ranges in spite of the inconvenience of moving heavy equipment over muddy roads in rainy seasons. The sandy soil would minimize the danger of ricochets. The farmland was not prime agricultural land for cash crops nor was it suitable for emergency food production. Given the marginal economy of the area in the previous decades, the land was available on option at reasonable prices (\$67 per acre). The Galena Gazette newspaper remarked editorially, "In early days Sand Prairie was a real wild west and a rival to California and Nevada mining camps. The old California diggins are located there .... A great amount of ore was taken from these mines and it is believed there is still much more down deep." Only one stone house (built in 1836 - 1840 by John Beaty as a stagecoach stop) and a few wooden farm houses survive from the original area. But the Army was not interested stagecoaches, in mining or farming; it was primarily concerned with building a proving ground as rapidly as possible.<sup>8</sup>

By January 1918 the land had been surveyed, the tracings of maps for construction had been completed, and plans drawn up for the buildings. According to a later

historical survey, "Major Waldren and First Lieutenants Lane and French, all stationed at Rock Island [Arsenal], prepared tentative master plans for the depot which were later reviewed by Captain Charles C. Chase, [the] construction officer for the Savanna project." The buildings, to be located on an area called the "Hill," included an administrative building, enlisted men's barracks, hospital, instrument building, officers' quarters, and a commanding officer's residence. The buildings were made of red brick, were functional, and traditional in design with "a degree of Craftsman-style influence in their design." Another area, designated the "Combined Shop," included plans for ammunition storage, engine house, garages, instrument building, warehouse, and vehicle storage. The construction of the facilities began in April 1918. Because of the shortage of laborers in the area workers had to be brought in from Chicago.<sup>9</sup>

### Operations in World War I

The Inspection Division of the Ordnance Department was anxious to proceed with proof-firing. By 18 April 1918 it was sending lists to the Commanding Officer of the Rock Island Arsenal with the current production figures for weapons, gun carriages, primers, and cartridge cases that had already been delivered or were on order. Subsequent updates of the list on 18 June 1918 showed that guns, carriages, and ammunition were produced by such companies as the Wisconsin Gun Company, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; the NorthWestern Ordnance Company, Madison, Wisconsin; the Western Cartridge Company, East Alton, Illinois; the Federal Pressed Steel Company, Minneapolis, Minnesota; the Chicago Pneumatic Tool Company, Chicago, Illinois; and the Indiana Fiber Products Company, Marion, Indiana as well as production at the Rock Island Arsenal. "It is requested that this office be notified when the Savanna Proving Ground will be in position to proof fire the above guns and ammunition," a memo on 18 June 1918 memo stated, "[so that] the necessary shipping orders will be issued to the various plants."<sup>10</sup>

The testing of the various weapons was a complicated process. For example, a telegram from the Ordnance Engineering Bureau in Washington, D.C. to the Rock Island Arsenal on 27 April 1918 confirmed that "the maximum service range [240 m/m] howitzer [was] seventeen thousand yards [and for the 155 m/m] gun filloux [i.e. Pilloux] sixteen thousand five hundred yards."<sup>11</sup> As the following table prepared in 1990 indicates, the firing ranges of American and Allied weapons varied widely:<sup>12</sup>

	<u>Max Range, Shell</u>	<u>Max Range, Shrapnel</u>
75 mm (US, 1916)	8400 m (5.2 mi)	8900 m (5.5 mi)
75 mm (British, 1917)	5600 m (3.5 mi)	5900 m (3.7 mi)
75 mm (French, 1897)	6400 m (4.0 mi)	7130 m (4.4 mi)

	<u>Max Range</u>
155mm (Pilloux)	16,000 m (9.9 mi)
155mm (Schneider, Howitzer)	11,500 m (7.1 mi)
155mm (Bethlehem, Howitzer, 90lb)	14,000 yd (8.0 mi)
155mm (Bethlehem, Howitzer, 120lb)	10,000 yd (5.7 mi)

In May 1918, the commanding officer of the Savanna Proving Ground, Major Charles R. Baxter, requested that a 155 m/m howitzer be shipped in July to expedite the proof-testing, a request that he increased to two howitzers in August because of the backlog of work.<sup>13</sup>

By September 1918 the Savanna Proving Ground was beginning to take shape as a standard military operation. Major Baxter requested that ordnance guards be provided to protect the facility and to relieve his more highly skilled or technical personnel from the routine task of guard duty. Because of a shortage of regular barracks, he proposed converting the temporary "bunk houses" left over from the construction crews to house the guards. In the time honored manner of military commanders confronted with an overwhelming task and a tight schedule, he requested on 12 September 1918 that forty additional enlisted men be sent to the proving ground. On 19 September 1918 a minor crisis developed. Major Baxter reported that 75 m/m guns, 4.7 inch guns, and 4 inch trench mortars had arrived but that some of the necessary primers, powder, and cartridges had not yet arrived. But, most important, the necessary firing records and typewriters had not arrived. "We cannot proof-fire guns and carriages under instruction of Inspection Division," he reported, "until we receive form one nought nine six report of inspection and form two three fix six star gauge record of guns and carriages to be tested." A traditional army, in the famous phrase attributed to Napoleon Bonaparte "marches on its stomach," but a modern Army cannot function without proper forms, records, and typewriters.<sup>14</sup>

The Savanna Proving Ground soon faced a new challenge. According to the later history of World War I weapons, "at the time of entry into World War I, the United States did not number the trench mortar as one of its standard weapons. Britain, however, had adopted a standard 3-inch trench mortar weapon known as the Stokes Mortar. This [muzzle loaded, smooth bore] weapon had a high angle fire, short range, and short barrel .... It fired a projectile weighing 11.7 pounds a maximum distance of 750 yards."<sup>15</sup> Once again messages flew between Savanna and Washington as Major Baxter requested and received information on the ballistic tests applicable to the Stokes Mortar shell and its accessories. Given its short range and different trajectory than the howitzer, Major Baxter's General Orders clarified the boundaries of the firing range and reiterated that "no one will enter upon the Range without first securing permission from the Chief Proof Officer."<sup>16</sup>

By the end of October 1918 the installation had settled into the familiar pattern of a military post of the time. General Orders Number 4, for example, specified the daily routine:<sup>17</sup>

	<u>Daily</u>	<u>Sunday</u>
First Call	5:30 a.m.	6:30 a.m.
Reveille	5:45	6:45
Police Mess	6:00	7:00
Sick Call	7:30	
Recall	11:45	
Mess	12:00 m.	12:00 m.
Fatigue (Drill)	1:00 p.m.	
Recall	4:30	
Guard Mount	4:45	4:45 p.m.
Retreat	5:00	5:00
Mess	5:30	5:30
Tattoo	9:30	9:30
Call to Quarters	9:45	9:45
Taps	10:00	10:00

The available partial records show that by 21 October 1918 the following personnel were on duty or had also served in the building phase of the Savanna Proving Ground: (They are listed by rank, name, classification and rating as reported in the records.)

#### Rock Island Arsenal

Colonel Hillman, L.T. Ordnance Department, Commanding Officer, Rock Island Arsenal  
 Captain Smoot, Aldon. Quartermaster Corps, Construction officer, Savanna Proving Grounds, January-December 1918  
 Coyne, I.H. Supervising Engineer, Savanna Proving Grounds, January-December 1918

#### Savanna Proving Ground: Officers

Major Baxter, Chas R. Ordnance Department, Commanding Officer, Savanna Proving Ground, 24 June 1918 - 26 February 1919  
 Captain Day, F.S., Jr. Ordnance Department, Adjutant, Savanna Proving Grounds, September 1918  
 1st Lieutenant Smith, D.T. Ordnance Department, Adjutant, Savanna Proving Ground, October 1918

Savanna Proving Ground: Enlisted Personnel

Sgt. Bump, Harry A.	Welder and cutter	Rating 1
Sgt. Cleary, Patrick F	Electrician	Rating 1
Sgt. Crowe, William L.	Pipe fitter	Rating 1
Sgt. Daugherty, John	Tailor	Rating 1
Sgt. Erb, John J., Jr	Accountant	Rating 1
Sgt. Friedman, Sammul D.	Paper Worker	Rating 1
Sgt. Harrington, Clarence M.	Welder cutter	Rating 3
Sgt. Johnson, David L.	Stenographer Typist	Rating 1
Sgt. Neubauer, Anthony C.	Carpenter	Rating 1
Sgt. Rickles, Peretz A.	Employment Manager	Rating 1
Sgt. Stewart, Walter	Soldier for 15 years	Rating 1
Cpl. Earl, William A.	Gunsmith	Rating 1
Cpl. McCamley, Edward J.	Boilermaker	Rating 1
Cpl. Morgan, George T.	Stenographer Typist	Rating 1
Cpl. Kuebrick, George	Businessman	Rating 1
Cpl. Slatrow, Samuel	Stenographer Typist	Rating 3
Pvt. Bearden, Howard K.	Gas Engine & Repairman	Rating 1
Pvt. Beaver, Jack C.	Chauffeur Auto	Rating 3
Pvt. Brand, Fred	Farmer	Rating 1
Pvt. Brinkman, William E.	Engineman Fire[man]	Rating 1
Pvt. Brnan, Vincent P.	Draftsman	Rating 1
Pvt. Cameron, Lawrence O.	Auto Mechanic	Rating 1
Pvt. Carlotrom, Walter W.	Baker & Cook	Rating 1
Pvt. Cater, Abraham R.	Printer	Rating 1
Pvt. Clemons, Joseph N.	Auto Mechanic	Rating 1
Pvt. Cierpka, John M.	Leather Worker	Rating 2
Pvt. Damiani, John	Tailor	Rating 1
Pvt. DeCon, Jay I.	Clerical Worker	Rating 1
Pvt. Degerman, Edward P.	Upholsterer & Trimmer	Rating 1
Pvt. Delaney, Michael T.	Foundryman	Rating 1
Pvt. Dembrowski, Stanley J.	Foundryman	Rating 1
Pvt. Doering, Eric M.	Instrument Maker & Repairman	Rating 1
Pvt. Enge, Russell L.	Machinist	Rating 1
Pvt. Fabrizio, Felix	Machinist	Rating 1
Pvt. Flood, Edward J.	Baker & Cook	Rating 1
Pvt. Gayton, Walter S.	Draftsman	Rating 1
Pvt. Gerner, Oscar A.	Foundryman	Rating 1
Pvt. Gilhawley, Bernard	Crane Operator-Hoistman	Rating 1
Pvt. Gueth, Joseph P.	Clerical Worker	Rating 1
Pvt. Harbour, Frank H.	Chauffeur Auto	Rating 1

Pvt. Holst, Andrew C.	Structure Steel & Iron worker	Rating 1
Pvt. Kamarit, Joseph	Tailor	Rating 1
Pvt. Kelley, Geo. N.	Stenographer & Typist	Rating 1
Pvt. Kligerman, Edw. L.	Salesman	Rating 1
Pvt. Kramar, Chas. R.	Machinist	Rating 2
Pvt. Kruckeberg, George E.	Gas Engine & Repairman	Rating 1
Pvt. Kubiak, Peter P.	Foundryman	Rating 1
Pvt. Laurain, Herbert R.	Pipe Fitter	Rating 1
Pvt. LaVoice, Harry C.	Boilermaker	Rating 1
Pvt. Layton, Richard L.	Farmer	Rating 1
Pvt. McConahy, Edward E.	Salesman	Rating 1
Pvt. McNulty, John T.	Sheet Metal Worker	Rating 3
Pvt. McSumber Alden H.	Lumberman	Rating 2
Pvt. 1st class, Malone, E.B.	Gas Engine & Repairman	Rating 1
Pvt. Maraden, John	Machinist	Rating 1
Pvt. Mayles, John	Baker & Cook	Rating 1
Pvt. Melchior, Peter J.	Boilermaker	Rating 1
Pvt. 1st class, Moore, A.W.	Accountant	Rating 1
Pvt. Muelier, Bernard J.	Clerical Worker	Rating 1
Pvt. Mullen, Ronald E.	Lumberman	Rating 1
Pvt. Murtha, Joseph P.	Telephone Man	Rating 1
Pvt. Nooth, Henry A.	Machinist	Rating 1
Pvt. North, Joseph L.	Baker & Cook	Rating 1
Pvt. Norton, George	Sheet Metal Worker	Rating 1
Pvt. Paarfusser, Frank J.	Clerical Worker	Rating 1
Pvt. Paoenna, John	Machinist	Rating 1
Pvt. Pappas, Basiless C.	Photographer	Rating 1
Pvt. Paulus, Harry	Machinist	Rating 1
Pvt. Pevey, William W.	Farmer	Rating 2
Pvt. Piper, Chauncey E.	Telephone Man	Rating 1
Pvt. Proffitt, John R.	Clerical Worker	Rating 1
Pvt. Radcliff, Oscar Lee	Farmer	Rating 1
Pvt. Readle, Robert M.	Machinist	Rating 1
Pvt. Reetor, James Jerry	Factory Worker	Rating 1
Pvt. Ross, William J.	Foundryman	Rating 1
Pvt. Ruehl, John H.	Sheet Metal Worker	Rating 1
Pvt. Ryan, Phillip R.	Pipe Fitter	Rating 1
Pvt. Ryan, William C.	Electrician	Rating 1
Pvt. Schweikhhardt, James B.	Engineman & Fire[man]	Rating 1
Pvt. Sheffler, William	Welder & Cutter	Rating 1
Pvt. Slovick, John F.	Machinist	Rating 1
Pvt. Smith, Clair W.	Barber	Rating 2
Pvt. Smith, George H.	Sheet Metal Worker	Rating 1
Pvt. Stacy, Jesse	Laborer	Rating 1

Pvt. Sternhagen, John	Factory Worker	Rating 1
Pvt. Stewart, Thomas	Boilermaker	Rating 2
Pvt. Stnobler, Milton F.	Machinist	Rating 1
Pvt. Stoker, Wayne A.	Auto Mechanic	Rating 1
Pvt. Sullivan, James F.	Pipe Fitter	Rating 1
Pvt. Tarvin, John C.	Clerical Worker	Rating 1
Pvt. Taylor, Raymond C.	Instrument Maker & Repairman	Rating 2
Pvt. Tewell, Oliver C.	Farmer	Rating 2
Pvt. Tresp, William A.	Railroad Operator	Rating 1
Pvt. VanBuren, Clarence E.	Chauffeur Auto	Rating 1
Pvt. Wagner, Chas B.	Foundryman	Rating 2
Pvt. Welch, James T.	Railroad Operator	Rating 1
Pvt. White, William C.	Carpenter	Rating 1
Pvt. Willard, Frank	Farmer	Rating 1
Pvt. Wilson, Preston	Horseman	Rating 1
Pvt. Winkler, Henry A.	Engineer & Fireman	Rating 3
Pvt. Wise, Luther B.	Stock Keeper	Rating 1
Pvt. Wyker, Henry A.	Electrician	Rating 1
Pvt. Zeiger, Joseph W.	Clerical Worker	Rating 2

As to the suggestion that civilians be hired to replace some of the rating 1 personnel, Major Baxter pointed out the scarcity of skilled labor in the Savanna area, the shortage of suitable housing, the muddy, unpaved roads, and the cost of providing transportation by railroad. What he needed, he said, was more equipment and military personnel, particularly typewriters and men "of clerical ability to work in the record room."<sup>18</sup>

Events in Europe moved swiftly in October and November 1918 and would ultimately affect even the Savanna Proving Ground. On 4 October 1918 the German and Austrian governments had appealed to President Wilson, on the basis of his Fourteen Points for peace, that he mediate an armistice. With mutiny in the German fleet, revolutionary outbreaks in Munich, and the abdication of Kaiser William II on 9 November 1918, the fighting was all but over. The official armistice took place on 11 November 1918. By mid December, President Wilson had proceeded to Europe to participate in the peace conference. There is a certain irony, therefore, in the faded, hand written documents preserved in the archives of test firings of ammunition in December 1918, the careful inventory of buildings, roads, and construction projects completed, and the updating of maps and tracings. With peace came a number of new problems for the Savanna Proving Ground. Lieutenant Colonel Baxter, commanding officer, noted that "a number of high explosive shells have been fired which have failed to detonate" and prohibited all personnel "from handling, or in any way disturbing these shells, except at the order, and under the direction of the Chief Proof Officer." First Lieutenant D.T. Smith, Adjutant, also warned, "all members of the Detachment, and especially those who drive motor vehicles, [that they] are directed while in the City of Savanna, Illinois, to be sure that they do not drive faster than ten (10) miles per hour"

subject not only to arrest by civil authorities but punishment by the military as well.<sup>19</sup>

On 16 December 1918, Lieutenant Colonel Baxter had sent a long memo to the Commanding Officer of the Rock Island Arsenal. In it Baxter outlined the personnel requirements "for a permanent force to maintain the equipment and carry on the work on a peace-time basis at this proving ground." The plan for the 155 man force was divided into the requisite departments and offices: proof department, headquarters, record room, service department, supply department, and detachment support. Baxter admitted that "practically all of the enlisted organization at this proving ground are desirous of immediate discharge from the service," but warned that "until such time as they can be replaced by men of the ability indicated [in his memo], their services cannot be spared." He repeated his arguments about the difficulty of securing adequately trained civilian workers in the event that military personnel could not be procured. He even noted that "it will be necessary to erect quarters for civilian employees at this place" if commuting by railroad from Savanna on a daily basis was too expensive. Whatever the fate of Baxter's memo, he and his generation had learned an important lesson in the Great War (as they would eventually call it). In an uncertain and hostile world, preparedness was the price that must be paid in peace times to avoid a possible disaster in wartime. Having built, and perfected the Savanna Proving Ground under adverse conditions, he believed that it ought to be maintained in a state of readiness.<sup>20</sup>

### Endnotes for Chapter One

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11. Telegram, Engineering Bureau 4095 Army Ordnance, Washington D.C. to Rock Island Arsenal, Rock Island, Illinois, 27 April [1918] (xerox copy in Savanna Ordnance Depot files).
12. Information extracted from 15 November 1918 handbook, Characteristics of Field Artillery, by Ken Powers, Ordnance Museum, Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD, enclosed in Savanna Army Depot Activity, "Suspected WWI Artillery Impact Area, 13 September 1990."

13. Major Chas. P. Baxter, Commanding Officer, Savanna Proving Ground, to Engineering Bureau, Planning Section, Ordnance Department, Washington, D.C., 21 August 1918.
14. Commanding Officer, Savanna Proving Ground, to Chief of Ordnance, General Administration Bureau, Commissioned Personnel Section, Washington, D.C., 16 September 1918 (request for Ordnance guards); Commanding Officer, Savanna Proving Ground, to Enlisted Personnel Section, Administration Section, Office of Ordnance, Washington, D.C., 21 October 1918, 5th Ind., p. 4 (telegrams of 12 September - 20 September 1918, request for additional men); and Commanding Officer, Savanna Proving Ground, to Commanding Officer, Rock Island Arsenal, 19 September 1918 (request for forms and typewriters); (National Archives, Great Lakes Region, RG 156, Records of the Office of the Chief of Ordnance; Savanna Ordnance Depot, General Correspondence, 1918-1919, Boxes 1 and 2.).
15. United States Army, Technical Manual TM9-1904, Small Arms and Trench Warfare, pp. 272-77 (quotation on p. 272).
16. Commanding Officer, Savanna Proving Ground to Inspection Division, Executive Section, Proving Ground Branch, Washington, D.C., 1 October and 9 October 1918; and Savanna Proving Ground, General Order No. 3-30 October 1918, (National Archives, Great Lakes Region, RG 156, Savanna Proving Ground, General Orders of the Proving Ground, 1919-1928, Box 1, pt. 1.).
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18. Commanding Officer, Savanna Proving Ground, to Enlisted Personnel Section, Administration Section, Engineering Division, Office of the Chief of Ordnance, Washington, D.C., 21 October 1918, 5th Ind., pp 3 and 4 (quotation).
19. Savanna Proving Ground, General Orders No. 7 - 22 January 1919 and No. 8 - 6 February 1919.
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## CHAPTER TWO

### From the end of World War I to the beginning of World War II

With the end of hostilities in Europe, the Wilson administration faced a dilemma. "When it became obvious that the United States would not accept the Versailles Treaty," historian Robert K. Murray has noted, "the Wilson administration, mainly through the person of Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, renewed its support for naval rearmament [under the authorization of the Naval Appropriations Act of 1916]. The [Wilson] administration also requested increased congressional appropriations and opposed any reductions in the strength of the army and navy as long as there was no final settlement of the war."<sup>1</sup> But Congress was reluctant to embark on excessive spending for rearmament; however, it did recognize that changes were necessary to ensure an adequate defense structure. After many months of debate, Congress on 4 June 1920 passed an amendment of the National Defense Act of 1916. The Army of the United States was to be composed of three components: (1) the Regular Army (professionals), (2) the National Guard (trained civilians), and (3) the Organized Reserves (trained civilians). The Navy would provide the first line of defense. The Regular Army would police the Mexican border and some overseas possessions, ensure domestic order when necessary, and engage in systematic training of the National Guard and Organized Reserve personnel. In June 1920 the Regular Army numbered 200,000; in January 1921 Congress reduced the authorized enlisted strength to 175,000. The Navy's request for 1921 was slashed by close to 50 percent as disarmament advocates became increasingly vocal in Congress.<sup>2</sup>

The presidential election of November 1920 had pitted Republican Warren G. Harding against Democrat James M. Cox. Harding's victory and inauguration in March 1921 put the issue of military preparedness and budget appropriations squarely in the Republican camp. With congressional sentiment strongly in favor of reducing wartime taxes, cutting government spending, reducing the federal debt, and avoiding "entanglement" in European affairs, there was anxiety among preparedness advocates. But President Harding had a reputation as a "big navy" supporter and a cautious advocate of defense. On 12 April 1921 he remarked, "We shall not entirely discard our agencies for defense until there is removed the need to defend." Thus reassured, preparedness advocates had to adjust to another postwar reality, the Budget and Accounting Act of 10 June 1921. This act set up a Budget Bureau with a director who was to help the president to prepare an annual budget" giving to Congress complete information regarding revenues, expenditures, and the condition of the treasury, together with a forecast of administration plans for the future." Secretary of War John W. Weeks would often complain over the ensuing years that the budget director was slashing his military requests, but President Harding firmly backed the budget director. The 1920s would be a new era for military expenditures.<sup>3</sup>

### From Savanna Proving Ground to Savanna Ordnance Depot

In this context of budget restraints and defense reorganization, the Army found itself with huge reserves of ammunition and no place to store them. The proving ground at Savanna had a large expanse of land and the technological background to store, salvage, and destroy ammunition as need be. The Army recognized the need for storage facilities and authorized construction of warehouses at the Savanna Proving Ground. Prior to the end of the war, the Army had begun constructing various buildings to provide for increased activity at Savanna. Facilities were constructed for such specialized functions as a factory engineer plant, a machine shop, lumber and water storage areas, garages, and the heating plant. These buildings differed slightly in design and materials used from the first red brick buildings built at Savanna. These secondary buildings were constructed out of concrete, wood frames, and either asphalt rolled roofing or asbestos shingles. In 1919 and 1920 most of the construction was for storage facilities to be used for ammunition, carriages, and artillery. Forty general purpose warehouses were constructed out of concrete with sheet metal walls and roofs to provide for initial storage. (Fifteen of the original forty were still in use in 1984.) An oil storage building, round house and car shop, repair and utility clock house, battery maintenance and repair shop, and a storehouse for the post engineer were also built.<sup>4</sup>

One of the interesting features of the 1921 construction program was a 320,000 square foot sodium nitrate storage pit. During World War I sodium nitrate had been purchased from private supplies and shipped to ammunition production facilities throughout the country. Keeping a reserve of sodium nitrate indicated that the government was attempting to be prepared in the case of any future military needs. The final large storage project was the construction of forty-seven standard ammunition storage magazines and thirty high explosives magazines. These buildings would be used to store ammunition, black powder and artillery equipment. Safety and security were of utmost importance at the depot during this time period. A non-climbable fence was constructed around the ammunition storage area and guards were assigned to the area twenty-four hours a day. Since almost all of the staff at the depot were military personnel, guard duty was one of the few assignments for which the personnel did not have the day off for such holidays as Christmas and Memorial Day.<sup>5</sup>

On 5 March 1921 the Savanna Proving Ground was granted its independence from the Rock Island Arsenal and was renamed the Savanna Ordnance Depot. The change in designation reflected the importance of the mission of storage and reclamation of ammunition and weapons. There were at that time only a few Ordnance ammunition companies in the country. In late 1920 the 52nd Ordnance Company was assigned to Savanna. They provided most of the labor needed to run the depot. According to Major Charles Baxter's original memo of 16 December 1918 on personnel needs for permanent operations, the following would be required to perform the necessary duties:

Proof Department . . . . . 54 men

Headquarters . . . . .	6 men
Record Room . . . . .	5 men
Service Department . . . . .	31 men
Supply Department . . . . .	10 men
Detachment . . . . .	<u>49 men</u>
Total for manning depot . . . . .	155 men

Since the 52nd included married personnel, three two-family officers' quarters were built in 1921. Single personnel were accommodated by three barracks also built in 1921. The relative isolation of the facility from nearby towns meant that personnel found their recreation in sporting activities, horseback riding, and gymnastics. A small social life developed around the married personnel as the wives held afternoon teas and social activities. The Ordnance Department, by the 4 June 1920 amendments to the National Defense Act of 1916, was authorized a maximum strength of 350 officers (colonels to second lieutenants) and 4,500 enlisted men. Actual strength was less than these numbers in the 1920s as Congress periodically reduced the military personnel levels and appropriations. So service in the Ordnance was a small world in which personnel knew each other, rotated among assignments, and engaged in teaching duties with National Guard units.<sup>6</sup>

The mission of storage and reclamation of ammunition continued throughout the remainder of the 1920s. Because of the constant monitoring of ammunition, the depot became adept at reclamation and storage work. Ammunition that was no longer serviceable had to be destroyed at the burning ground - a field located at the back end of the depot. Any serviceable remainders were then re-used in the production process. In addition to occasionally supplying other nations' armies, the Army was using ammunition in storage for its own troop training. Savanna Ordnance Depot would pull ammunition from the storage facilities and ship it all over the country, utilizing the multiple rail lines that ran through the depot.

As the Center of Military History has summarized the situation between the wars, "for almost two decades ground units had to get along as best they could with weapons left over from World War I." One of the few areas of development in the 1920s was the Army Air Corps. With the Air Corps Act of 1926, some increase in the Army personnel level was authorized and some aircraft armament development work proceeded. These developments soon impacted on the Ordnance depots. Handling, storage, and maintenance of Army Air Corps material soon exceeded the capacity of the locally assigned depots and caused additional logistical problems. In addition to the storage of ammunition, depots were responsible for the special equipment used in the production of ammunition and loading it into the air carriers. The storage and production of this equipment was also creating quite a nightmare as the Army attempted to consolidate all the work in a few areas. Along with Ogdan, Utah depot and Delaware depot (Pedricktown, New Jersey), Savanna became one of the primary centers for Army Air

Corps storage.<sup>7</sup>

Savanna qualified for funds to construct the necessary storage facilities to accommodate Air Corps needs, primarily storage igloos under the Wilcox Act. Savanna would share in the \$5,000,000 appropriated by Congress for the construction of storage facilities to serve, in part, the Army Air Corps. An igloo was a 3/4 round concrete dome with one flat side that held the only door. Each igloo was covered with earth so as to increase its safety. Two types of igloos were ultimately constructed at Savanna. Those in C-section were built in 1929 and were 1,098 square feet each. Those built later, in 1939 and in 1942, were 1,798 square feet each. Thus, by the end of the 1920s, Savanna Ordnance Depot was playing an important role in the development of American air power.<sup>8</sup>

#### Savanna Ordnance Depot in the 1930s

The stock market crash of 24 October - 28 October 1929 signaled the beginning of the Great Depression. Soon a series of business failures, bank crises, and rising unemployment figures forecast a fiscal problem for the federal government. Congress was faced with declining revenue and rising demands for government sponsored public works and agricultural relief. By 1932 approximately 20,000 unemployed veterans of World War I gathered in Washington, D.C. to lobby for the Wright-Patman bill which would provide for early payment of their bonuses scheduled for 1945. When the Senate rejected the bill, over half of the "Bonus Marches" left town for their homes or "Hooverville" shantytowns. When the remaining veterans clashed with the local police, President Hoover called upon the Army to evict the remaining marchers. By an excessive show of force, overstepping of its orders, and unfavorable photographs in newspapers, the Army commanders and the troops reaped a harvest of public indignation and antimilitary sentiment.<sup>9</sup>

Ironically, as the reputation of the Army suffered from the events of 1932 in the United States, militaristic and threatening events in Europe and Asia reminded some public leaders and preparedness advocates of the necessity of maintaining an adequate defense. The ammunition and weapons leftover from World War I that were stored at government expense in depots and warehouses were not, after all, a liability, they were a potential asset. This spurred the construction of additional shell loading facilities and storage areas. In 1932 the Savanna Ordnance Depot entered into this production by producing 155 mm shells and air craft bombs.<sup>10</sup>

The deteriorating international situation of 1935-1936 -- German remilitarization of the Rhine, Japanese conquest and consolidation of control over Manchuria, Italian invasion of Ethiopia, and threat of a civil war in Spain -- produced a paradoxical situation in the United States not unlike the preparedness debate of 1914-1916. The more the tensions in Europe and Asia increased, the more the American public wanted to isolate itself from these developments; but some Congressional leaders were also

willing to listen to requests by the military for more funds and to warnings by preparedness "prophets" of the need to "mechanize and motorize" the military. These cross currents were symbolized by the first Neutrality Act (1935). Congress prohibited the sale of weapons and munitions to nations at war on the belief that such sales in the past had involved the United States in World War I. At the same time, Congress was willing to listen to General Douglas MacArthur, who had complained for years that the Army's standard tank would be useless against modern equipment under combat conditions. "Although handicapped by very small appropriations for research and development," as the Center of Military History has pointed out, "Army arsenals and laboratories worked continuously during the 1920s and 1930s to devise new items of equipment and to improve old ones." These items would include the mobile 105 mm howitzer and the Garand semiautomatic rifle, both of which would have important implications for Army arsenals and ammunition manufacturers. With the outbreak of the Spanish civil war in 1936, Army appropriations began to increase. Congress "authorized the Regular Army to increase its enlisted strength to the long-sought goal of 165,000."<sup>11</sup>

Most of the labor in the 1930s was provided by Army personnel, but improved local transportation allowed for some civilian employment. The Great Depression had hit Carroll and Jo Davies counties drastically, but the Savanna Ordnance Depot managed to put some funds into the local economy through increased construction. In 1938 the depot received \$20,959 from the Federal relief funds for improvements in roads, rail tracks, barracks and officers quarters. Much of the construction in these late 1930s projects went to outside contractors; however, several of the construction workers who worked on these projects would later find work at the Depot at the onset of World War II. Another function of the Savanna Ordnance Depot between the wars was the training of army units in field exercises. Because of the open land at the depot, many units came to the depot for annual or special training. There was not enough housing for these units so they would camp out in the open fields. By the end of the 1930s, often when civilian employees would come to work at the depot, they would find the camps coming to life. The pup tents would disappear from the horizon and the units would begin their training, whether that be in field exercises or ammunition handling.<sup>12</sup>

The outbreak of war in Europe in 1939 marked an end to a phase in American isolation. As in 1916, the United States was officially neutral but increasingly involved in building up its own defenses and, eventually, in supporting its allies. Another Neutrality Act (1939) repealed the earlier arms embargo laws. Under the "cash and carry" doctrine, the United States could export arms and munitions to any nation (including belligerents) willing and able to pay for them and transport them on their own ships. By 1940 the United States would institute its first peace time draft and begin building up the military to unprecedented levels. By 11 March 1941 Congress would pass the Land-Lease Act which would make American war material and supplies available "on loan" to other allied nations. The ammunition held in storage since World War I would now flow to beleaguered Allied forces abroad.<sup>13</sup>

The Savanna Ordnance Depot was thus in the "war business" even before the United States became involved officially in World War II as a belligerent. Savanna was responsible for many facets of the development and procurement of ammunition for the Army. The basic production of the ammunition went through a cycle: TNT would be poured into the empty casing, a fuse would be attached, and then the entire unit was sealed. After the shells were filled in the C-F plant, they were linked together in the linking and belting plant. They would then be inspected and packed into crates. From here they would either be stored or loaded directly onto the train cars for distribution around the world. The production of the 300 pound bombs had many phases as well. The TNT was poured into the bombs in the C-L plant. Once filled and sealed, they had to be painted. They would ride out on a conveyer belt to the packing area, where the bottoms of the bombs would also be painted. The purpose of painting the ammunition was to seal the bomb in a rust-proof coat of "army green." All ammunition produced at Savanna would be stenciled with the letters SOD, for Savanna Ordnance Depot. When ammunition was later used in the fields, troops could identify where the ammunition was produced.

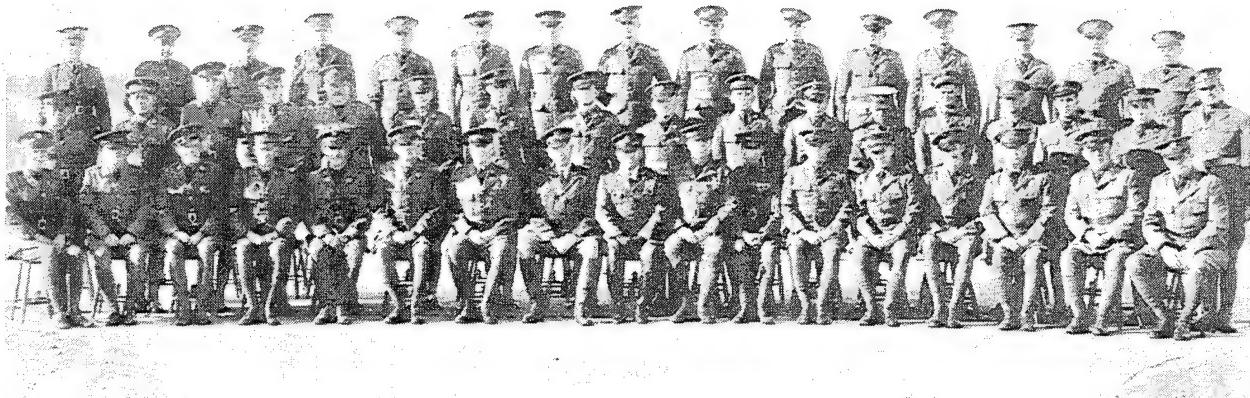
There were many side processes involved in the production of ammunition, too. Because of the scarcity of certain materials, the Savanna Ordnance Depot was sometimes involved in salvage work. Often bombs would be returned to the depot if they had not been exploded. The original TNT had to be washed out and the casing cleaned for the bomb to be refilled. The ammunition developed at Savanna relied primarily on TNT for its explosive power but some weapons used ammonium nitrate. Ammonium nitrate could be used to provide the initial explosion which set off the TNT or it could be used independently in artillery shells. During World War II, Savanna Ordnance Depot would become the home to the only open air, ammonium nitrate storage pit in the United States. The plan was to store the ammonium nitrate at the Depot so that ready supplies would be available for the Ordnance Department. (For a reason not entirely clear in the available records, the storage facility never saw active use.)<sup>14</sup>

By 1941, Savanna Ordnance Depot was no longer "just a depot," a place to store surplus ammunition and equipment until needed. It was now a vital link in the process of building up the military by manufacturing, transporting, and developing new weapons and ammunition. But the old question continued to haunt the nation - preparedness for what? On 7 December 1941 they received their answer at Pearl Harbor. The 52nd Ordnance Company, under the command of Captain Arthur P. Woodman, received its departure orders on 20 December 1941. They left the Savanna Ordnance Depot for Camp Hand, California, for a "temporary" change of station. In the fortunes of war, the 165 men of the 52nd Ordnance Company did not return to Savanna. Duty carried them elsewhere in World War II.

## Endnotes for Chapter Two

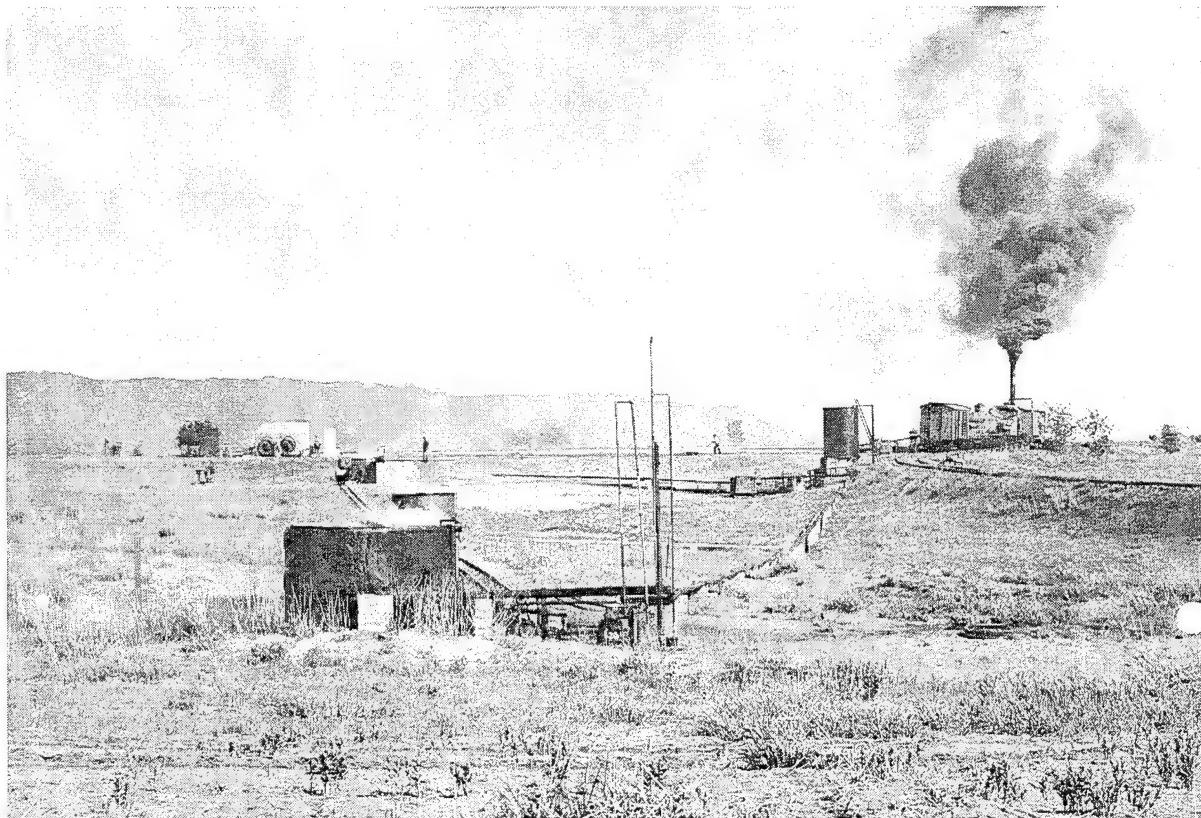
1. Robert K. Murray, The Harding Era: Warren G. Harding and His Administration (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1969), 141.
2. Center of Military History, American Military History (Washington, D.C.: United States Army, 1989), 407 (quotation)-09; Murray, The Harding Era, 141-42.
3. Ibid., 142-43 (Harding quotation) and 174-76 (description of Budget and Accounting Act).
4. Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record of the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Historic Properties Report: Savanna Army Depot Activity, Savanna, Illinois (November 1984), 14-16.
5. Ibid., 16-17; General Orders for 1920s-1930s.
6. Historic American Building Survey, Historic Properties Report (Nov. 1984), 16-17; Commanding Officer, Savanna Proving Ground, to Commanding Officer, Rock Island Arsenal, 16 December 1918 (National Archives, Great Lakes Region, RG 156, Records of the Chief of Ordnance, Savanna Ordnance Depot, General Correspondence, 1918-1919, Box 2); Ordnance School, Ordnance School Pamphlet No. 2, Brief History of the Ordnance Department (Aberdeen Proving Ground, April 1950), 35 (Section 12 - National Defense Act of 1916); and Center of Military History, American Military History, 409-10. On June 1921 total Regular Army enlisted strength was reduced to 150,000; in June 1922 to 125,000.
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8. Services Branch, Administration and Services Branch, "Master Plan of Savanna Army Depot Activity, Savanna, Illinois, Building Information Schedule" (April 1979); Savanna Army Depot Activity, Savanna Army Depot (promotional brochure, 1995), 5.
9. Donald J. Lisio, "A Blunder Becomes Catastrophe: Hoover, the Legion, and the Bonus Army," Wisconsin Magazine of History, 50(Autumn 1967): 37-50.
10. Savanna Army Depot Activity, Savanna Army Depot (brochure), 5.
11. Center of Military History, American Military History, 410 (quotation) and 415-16; Thomas J. Slattery, Rock Island Arsenal: An Arsenal for Democracy, World War II 50th Anniversary Commemorative Edition (Rock Island, IL: Historical Office, U.S. Army Armament, Munitions and Chemical Command, 1992), 2 and 6 (photographs); and Carol Berkin et. al., Making America: A History of the United States, annotated edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1995), 799-800.
12. Interview with Wayne Harmon (Tapes of the interviews for the Savanna Depot project are on deposit at the History Department, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois.)
13. Berkin, et. al., Making America, 801-06. The Neutrality Act of 1937 had required belligerents to pay cash for "nonwar" goods; the Act of 1939 repealed the arms embargo and provided for "cash and carry" sales.

14. Services Branch, "Master Plan of Savanna Army Depot Activity, Savanna, Illinois, Building Information Schedule."



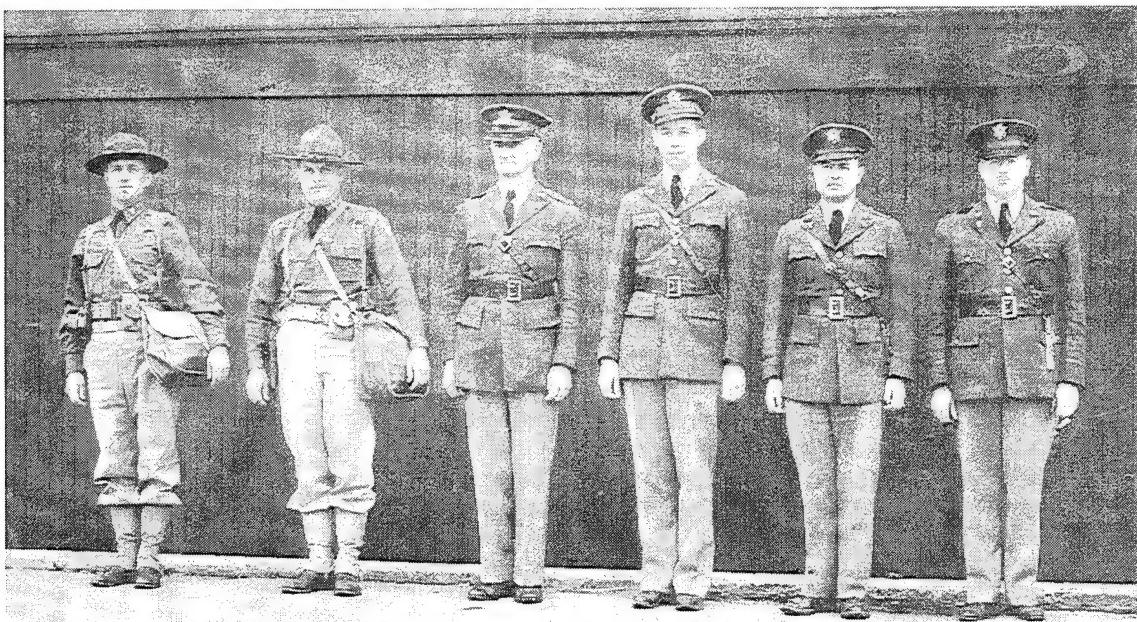
### THE ORIGINALS

**Group photo of soldiers stationed at Savanna Proving Grounds around 1929. Notice the full wrap around leggings. Officers wore full leather jack boots and pistol harnesses for easier recognition. Soldiers in this era laid out the humble beginnings of the installation.**



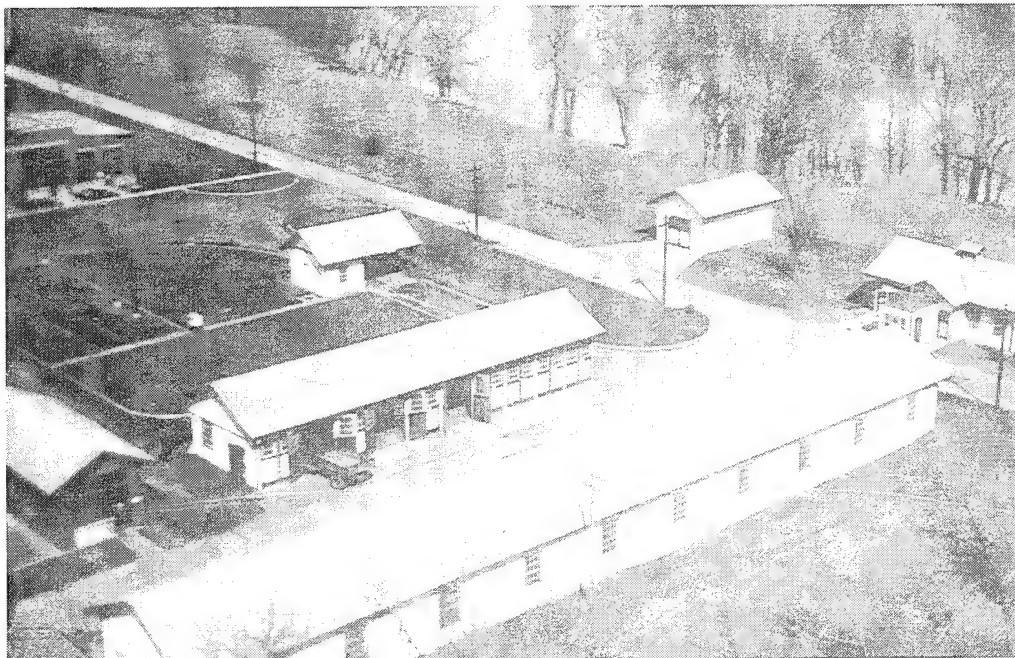
### LAYING THE INTERNAL RAILROAD TRACKS

**Early foundations of the transition from a proving grounds to storage depot were made in the late 1920's. The introduction of steam locomotives enabled large tonnages of supplies to be shipped in and out.**



### NCO'S AND OFFICERS OF S.O.D.

The 52nd Ordnance Company ran the daily ammunition functions during the 1930's and 1940's. They were mobilized for deployment to California after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. LTC Crim, post commander from 1937 - 1942, stands in the center.



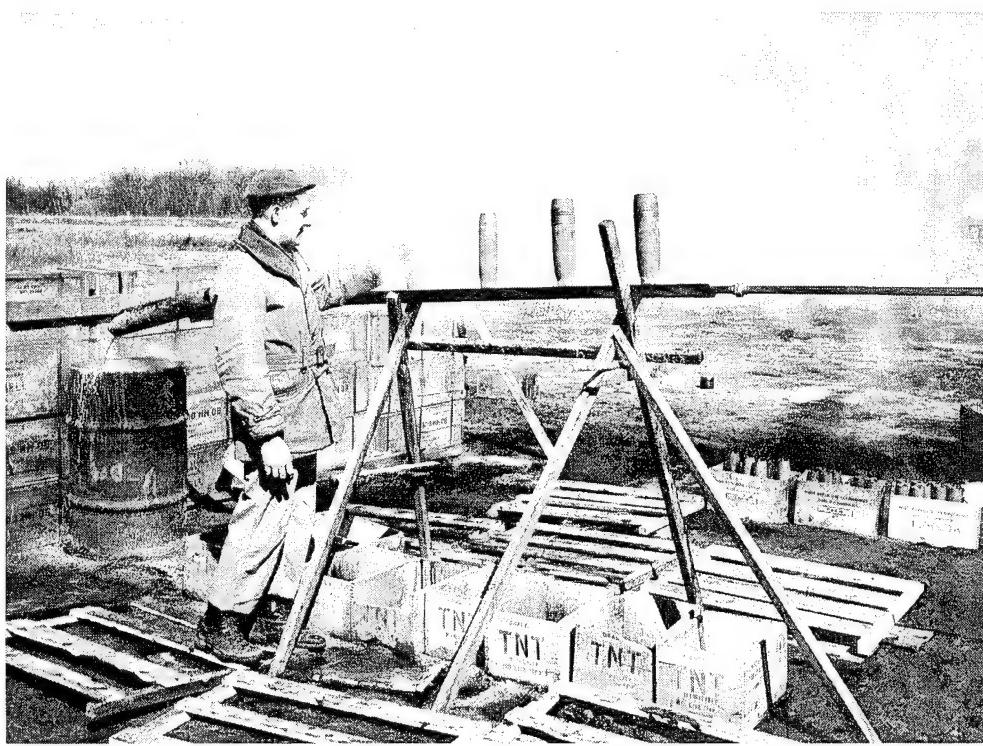
### EARLY SUPPORT BUILDINGS

Lower post began to take shape in the 1930's. This picture shows garages (center) and a guard house (center right). Today, a swimming pool is located next to the long building at the bottom.



### WINTER VIEW OF TEMPORARY HOUSING

The peak employment years of Savanna Ordnance Depot were during the 1940's. To meet wartime production demands, several housing projects were quickly established. Workers sometimes lived under austere conditions, such as seen in this picture of Blackhawk Village.



### WASHOUT OPERATIONS

Diversified roles emerged during the 1940's where every resource needed for the war was critical. Older munitions had their explosive fillers "washed out" and replaced for further use. Not realized at this time was the long-term consequences to the environment.



**AERIAL SHOT LOOKING EAST**

View of lower post facilities in the early 1960's. All these buildings are still in use today with the exception of the medical complex (center right) which was destroyed by fire. Newly planted trees in the foreground are now fully matured and provide shelter for deer and other natural wildlife.



**DEPOT WOMEN'S CLUB FUNCTION**

Social events have always played a large role on Savanna Ordnance Depot. Prayer breakfasts, Armed Forces Day, USO Dances, and festivities enhanced the comradery and quality of life for both civilians and soldiers. These elegant ladies preserve important traditions of Army life.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Production at Savanna Ordnance Depot in World War II

The Savanna Ordnance Depot played a pivotal role in the Second World War, in the development of the area surrounding the Depot, and in the lives of those who worked there. By the time the United States officially entered the war in December 1941, Savanna had already been supplying the Allied troops in Europe through the Lend-Lease program. Through this program the Army was authorized to ship old ammunition that had been stored following World War I to Allied forces. Throughout the war, Savanna would continue to supply the troops, both with ammunition produced on location at the Depot and with ammunition and equipment that was shipped through the Depot. In a 1942 ceremony at the Rock Island Arsenal, Illinois Governor Dwight Green summed up the importance of the work being done at the America arsenals when he said, "Today, the only business in America -- is the business of winning the war." The Depot continued production after the war was over for a short period of time. It retained its production capabilities as well in an effort to be "war ready." In 1955 it still had the capability to produce 25,000 rounds in a 24 hour time period if need be.<sup>1</sup>

#### The Human Side of Production at the Depot

The production of ammunition often had a very human element to it. Those people who produced and packed the equipment often put a little bit of themselves into each crate of ammunition shipped by putting their signatures on bombs and the inside of crates. The 17 January 1945 edition of The Clinton Herald ran a picture of Mrs. Alyce Smith of Savanna, an employee of the Depot signing a 100 pound bomb, dedicating it to her son, Lt. Robert Swingley who was overseas with the Air Force.<sup>2</sup> This type of psychological tie to the overseas fighting increased morale. It also connected this corner of Illinois to the theaters of war in both Europe and the Pacific.

The practice of signing names to ammunition and crating tied the Savanna Depot to D-Day activities in the Mediterranean as well. Ms. Esther Dolan of Savanna received a letter 13 June 1944 from Australian Air Force Officer, Alan Graham, who was stationed in Italy. According to an article in the Savanna Times-Journal, Graham wrote:

This is the fella that opened a case of ammo with your address in the packing this a.m. For your information, you packed this case of "sequence ammo" in MARCH 1943 and it was used by me on D-Day, today, June 6, 1944. Nice work Esther it was well belted.<sup>3</sup>

Ms Dolan was quoted as saying "I placed my name on the case just for fun, never expecting that the ammo would be used by anyone but an American soldier or sailor."<sup>4</sup> This type of involvement in the packing of ammunition gave an individualized human

touch to an otherwise inhumane war.

Production was quite high throughout the war. The Savanna Ordnance Depot received many awards for its production rates. Savanna earned three of the Army/Navy "E" awards for excellence in production throughout the duration of the war. The "E" was for enterprise, and these awards recognized superior achievements on the production front. Savanna earned its first "E" award on 8 December 1942, and again in September 1943 and 14 April 1945. With the first award came the privilege of flying the "E" award flag at the Depot and each employee received a pin. With the subsequent awards the flag earned another white star.<sup>5</sup> As is often the case, military and civilian outlooks on these awards were quite different. The Army believed these to be coveted awards that increased morale and therefore production. Many of the employees saw the recognition ceremony as much needed time-off. Richard Smith of Sabula, Iowa, tells of an "E" award ceremony that he attended while employed at the Depot. He missed much of it when another worker was late getting their truck back to the area. Smith said he personally did not mind the ceremonies because he could just stand there and listen for awhile instead of doing the regular hard labor out in the areas.<sup>6</sup>

Savanna Ordnance Depot also received awards for ammunition handling. Much ammunition not produced at the Depot came through it on the way to other places. Some of it would be stored in the igloos or magazines for the time being, other cases went directly from one box car to another. In the last six months of 1944, the Savanna Ordnance Depot handled more ammunition in and out of it than any other depot in the United States. The Depot not only handled an enormous bulk of material, it was very efficient as well. In the 8 March 1945 edition of the Galena Advertiser, Col. Brackett reported that an order of 29 carloads of bombs was received late one afternoon. The first bombs were being loaded less than 35 minutes after the order was received and the entire shipment was packed and on its way within six hours.<sup>7</sup>

Some of those working at the Depot during World War II were in the unique position of fighting the war as a civilian. Those employed at the Depot were constantly reminded that their work could help win or lose the war, and that it meant life or death for those fighting abroad. On the other hand, they were not soldiers and they had personal lives to return to after their eight hour shift was over. In addition, these "industrial soldiers" would continue their jobs after the war was won. This meant that victory to these "soldiers" would not necessarily mean either loss of work or a job switch. They did not have to look forward to going home to their families, they were already there. They were not living with a constant fear for their lives in quite the same way as those soldiers who were abroad.

At the onset of World War II, Savanna and the surrounding communities were still feeling the lingering effects of the Great Depression. The unemployment rate in these communities mirrored that of the nation as a whole. When production at the depot first picked up, it was manned by adult men who previously had been put out of

work by the depression. When the draft board called the production crews of the Depot into the Army, their jobs would be filled by a mixture of non-traditional employees. Those employees included women, teenagers, handicapped people and Italian prisoners of war.

In 1939 one hundred and forty-three civilians were employed by the depot, mostly in storage and reclamation work. By the end of 1942, the production lines were running twenty-four hours a day manned by a total of 7,195 persons. According to the 7 March 1946 edition of The Hanover Journal, the depot at its peak employed 8,500 civilians on a payroll of approximately \$1,500,000 a month.<sup>8</sup> In addition to the production and distribution of ammunition, Savanna served as the home to an ammunition safety school that trained approximately 300 officers and 10,000 enlisted men in the handling of explosives.<sup>9</sup> Almost every ammunition company in the United States Army had at least one individual who had been trained at Savanna Ordnance Depot. Civilian employees worked standard eight hour days on most occasions, but during periods of peak production and under other special circumstances men worked up to sixteen hour days.<sup>10</sup> Contrasted with the obligations of the military personnel assigned to the depot, this seemed quite fair.<sup>11</sup>

Civilian employees could be categorized as being of two types. Gang employees were those individuals who worked in a gang of seven or eight, along with a gang boss. These gangs would come in at the beginning of their shift and receive instructions on what they would be doing that day. Their work was whatever needed to be done that day. This could mean storing or pulling ammunition from igloos or magazines, reclamation work, or working on the production lines. The rest of the employees had permanent assignments. Permanent often meant about six months. But these employees would report directly to their assigned positions each day. Some of these skilled laborers performed support functions, including steam room operators, fire protection, fork lift operators and transportation.<sup>12</sup>

Other permanent employees were involved in the actual production of ammunition. Those who poured TNT or linked ammunition together in the belting plant were generally on permanent assignment. This was because they often proved specially capable of their assignment. Clarence Kindred of Sabula, Iowa, for example, had a specially poignant story of his assignment as a TNT pourer. Most people had a nervous reaction to pouring TNT day after day, either because of the dust or the stress of handling explosives. But Kindred had no problems pouring TNT. He had been working at the Depot for quite some time and the war in Europe was well under way. Most of his friends and neighbors had been called by the draft board by this time, but he had received no word. Fearing that a mistake had been made, Mr. Kindred traveled to the local Draft Board office on his day off. When he finally talked to an official, he was told that the Draft Board knew full well who he was and what he was currently doing at the Depot. They had decided that his work at the depot was vital war work and he would not be called into active service so long as he was still performing his duties as a TNT

pourer at the Depot.<sup>13</sup>

### Women and POWs in the Work Force at the Depot

The importance of civilian labor in Illinois was recognized when the supply of workers doubled during the war.<sup>14</sup> This interrelation of the military and civilians was increasingly true at the Depot. More management level positions in different departments were being held by civilian employees. Because so many individuals were hired into the Depot at the beginning of the war, and personnel increased throughout the duration, many employees quickly rose through the ranks. Pay scales are divided into wage board levels. New hires were generally hired in at level one unless they were veterans or had special training. It was not uncommon for people to rise in wage board classifications dramatically as they switched jobs. Because so many new people were hired in, some people secured management positions after only a few months. Of course when the war ended, and the Army was forced to engage in mass lay-offs, many people dropped in wage board pay levels as they accepted any job at the depot just to stay employed. Because many of the traditional male employees were called off to fight between 1941 and 1945, constant hiring and re-classification took place. By 1944 former depot employees who had been called to fight in the war totaled 1,857.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to people moving from one job to another, many women, youths (16-18 years of age), handicapped, and prisoners of war would fill the production lines and support jobs. For a period of time, even the fire department was entirely female-run. Women had been working at the Depot prior to WWII, but they now moved into production and handling of equipment as well as the traditionally female positions in the offices. By 15 April 1943, 36% of the depot employees were female, many of whom were in supervisory positions. In an article published in the week of 27 July 1944, Col. Brackett cited the safety records in multiple industries. The only industry with a better safety record than the ordnance depots was the ladies garment industry. According to Brackett:

Women workers have done a splendid job at the depot. They have learned to work quickly and with no previous training. If more women would only realize how much good they could do for our armed forces by going to work at the Savanna Army Depot, they would flock to the employment offices.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the chance to help the armed forces, many women were undoubtedly reluctant to leave their traditional roles. Articles in many newspapers encouraged women to take up work at the Depot. In an editorial in the 22 June 1944 edition of the Carroll County Mirror-Democrat, the newspaper stated: "... there is work to be done at the SOD [Savanna Ordnance Depot] and that if that work is to be accomplished many women who could be working on a war job right now, but aren't will have to lend a shoulder to the wheel." The editor continued to say that women who had small children

to care for should, of course, could stay home, but other women should rush to the employment office of the depot.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to the female work force the Army was forced to lower the age requirement for employees from eighteen to sixteen years of age in July 1944. These youths were allowed to work days at the Depot, in any position besides the production and handling of equipment. To these employees went the salvage and reclamation work as well as grounds keeping.<sup>18</sup>

Another non-traditional employee was the handicapped individual. In a 1953 article the Savanna Times-Journal pointed out that the Depot employed 90 handicapped individuals in such jobs as munitions handlers, store keepers, inspectors, nurses, maintenance, crafts, and forklift operators. Some of these individuals were veterans; others were local civilians. Employment of handicapped individuals during World War II had helped to alleviate the critical shortage of labor.<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps the most intriguing non-traditional employees that worked at the Depot during World War II were the Italian prisoners of war. The exact number of Italians who were stationed in Savanna is unknown, but approximately 800 were there between 19 July 1944 and 17 November 1945. The Italians were used to help alleviate the critical shortage of manpower. The prisoners of war volunteered for jobs after having sworn allegiance to the Allied cause, and passed a screening to assure they were not pro-Nazi or pro-Fascist. Most of the Italians working at the Savanna Army Depot were captured in North Africa, although others were captured in European fronts. Many had surrendered to American troops after having been drafted by the fascist government. They agreed to work at the Depot in order to bring victory quicker so they could return to their homes. By the time the Italian prisoners of war were brought to Savanna, Italy had overthrown the fascist government and had been accepted by the Allied forces as a co-belligerent against the Germans. Therefore, they were in a slightly different categorization than regular prisoners of war.<sup>20</sup>

The POWs were paid in accordance with the Geneva Convention regulations. Enlisted personnel were paid \$24 a month, Lieutenants \$44, Captains \$54, and Majors and above \$64. The Italians also qualified for special treatment for their contributions. POWs were often taken on sight-seeing tours and into nearby communities for recreational activities. A group would be taken to the movies every weekend. At the theater they would be roped off from the regular audience, because contact with civilians was strictly regulated. Many of the Italians had relatives in this country and the local papers were often a buzz with news of families being reunited. Perhaps the most touching story was that of Isadore and Sam DiBella. Both brothers were born in St. Louis, Missouri, but moved to Italy with their parents in 1921. In 1932, when Sam was 17 years old, he moved back to the states with the expectation that his little brother would follow shortly. Before Isadore could finalize his plans he was drafted into the

Italian Army. He was captured at the Battle of Tunisia by the French on 5 May 1943. He came to the United States as a POW on 1 June 1943. When given the chance to work for the Allied cause, he quickly volunteered. Stationed at the Savanna Depot he got word that his brother, who was fighting for the American cause, was on leave in the midwest. A reunion was quickly set up and the brothers were brought back together in this unusual set of circumstances.<sup>21</sup>

The majority of the work the POWs performed was "war work" according to an article that appeared in the Savanna-Times Journal after a group of newsmen were invited to watch the Italians at work, perhaps to dispel rumors that they were either given cushy work or were not getting along with their American hosts. The article was prepared for publication by the Depot, probably by Major Fred Hanson, Public Relations Officer, and appeared 4 August 1944:

The work is essentially war work, such as loading and unloading trucks, railroad cars, handling of equipment and salvage, crating and repairing or processing vehicles and other military equipment. Where members of the units possess valuable mechanical skills, these are utilized.<sup>22</sup>

The Depot pointed out that POW labor was never used in competition with civilian labor. Even when the Depot was bringing in hundreds of Italians, they were still hiring 16 and 17 year old youths to fill the immense shortages.

The total number of employees at the Depot dropped rapidly in September 1947 to 913 employees. With the return of armed service personnel to the area, many women went back to the home, and the Italians were returned to their homeland. Those civilian employees that remained at the Depot took drastic pay cuts as their wage board grade dropped. Veterans were given a five point preference on all tests and efforts were made to find them work at the Depot. But whatever their role, the employees of the Depot had done their "war duty" well.<sup>23</sup>

### Endnotes for Chapter Three

1. Thomas J. Slattery, Rock Island Arsenal: An Arsenal for Democracy, World War II 50th Anniversary commemorative Edition (Rock Island, IL: Historical Office, U.S. Army Armament, Munitions and Chemical Command, 1992), 15 (quotation by Governor Green); and Mary Watters, The Production Front in Illinois in the Second World War ed. Harry E. Pratt (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1952), II: 80, 178, 287, and 310.
2. The Clinton Herald, 17 January 1945.
3. Savanna Times-Journal, 14 June 1944; see also Telegraph-Herald (Dubuque, Iowa), 15 June 1944.
4. Ibid.
5. Clinton Herald, 20 April 1945, "Employees get another Reward," Telegraph-Herald, (Dubuque, Iowa), 22 April 1945, "Another E award for Depot Workers."
6. Personal interviews with Richard Smith and Howard Haggerty. (Tape recordings of interviews for the Savanna Depot project are deposited with the History Department, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois.)
7. Galena Advertiser 8 March 1945.
8. The Hanover Journal, 7 March 1946.
9. Constance McLaughlin Green, Harry C. Thomson, and Peter C. Roots, "The Ordnance Department: Planning Munitions for War" in The United States Army in World War II: The Technical Services (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1985, first published 1955), I:81.
10. Watters, The Production Front, II: 286-87.
11. Ibid., Chapter 3.
12. Personal interview with Wayne Harmon, Richard Smith, and Nelson/Harriet Bearsley.
13. Personal interview with Clarence Kindred.
14. Watters, The Production Front, II:199.
15. Savanna Times-Journal, 22 June 1944, "Help Wanted at Savanna Ordnance Depot."
16. Clinton Herald, 27 July 1944.
17. Carroll County Mirror-Democrat, 22 June 1944.
18. Galena Advertiser, 20 July 1944, "Sod May Now Employ 16 year old Youths;" Carroll County Mirror-Democrat, 20 July 1944, "Age Qualification Lowered At Sod."

19. Savanna Times-Journal, 31 March 1953; interviews with Richard Smith and Wayne Harmon. interview.
20. Savanna Times-Journal, 14 September 1944 and 4 August 1944; and Carroll County Mirror-Democrat, 10 August 1944.
21. Carroll County Mirror Democrat, 5 April 1945.
22. Savanna Times-Journal, 4 August 1944.
23. Interviews cited in this chapter included those with Richard Smith, Wayne Harmon, Clarence Kindred, March 1, 1996. Howard Haggerty, February 29, 1996, and Nelson/Harriet Bearsley, February 28, 1996.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Impact of War on the Depot and the Area

"The old saying 'live and learn' must be reversed in war, for there we 'learn and live'; otherwise, we die. It is with this learning, in order to live, that the Army is so vitally concerned." This quotation by Historian Michael D. Doubler from a War Department pamphlet issued in July 1945 sums up in brief the impact of the wartime tactics and logistics on the Army. Doubler has pointed to some of the lessons learned early in the war, and by implication the importance of the Ordnance system. "The theoretical principles of artillery employment taught by the Field Artillery School at Fort Sill, Oklahoma," he notes, "worked well under combat conditions. American artillery doctrine called for centralized control with decentralized execution and the use of tremendous concentrations of indirect fire." In the crucial Monte Cassino campaign in Italy in 1944, for example, "artillery delivered a single time-on-target (TOT) volley of 266 rounds" and "in one eight-hour period, artillery batteries fired 200,000 rounds in support of ground units attacking the city of Cassino." Only the capacity of American arsenals, depots, logistical, and transportation systems made such concentrated power possible.<sup>1</sup>

#### Savanna's Role in the Doolittle Raid and Other Wartime Activities

The psychological impact of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 overshadowed such long-term considerations as the importance of logistics and ammunition production on tactics and command. The American public, which had expected war to come from the Naval confrontation in the North Atlantic, was shocked, angry, and impatient with military priorities which called for a "Europe first" strategy. Accordingly, the American military was looking for a quick strike, some daring attack that would stun both the Japanese military leadership as well as the civilian population. A decision was made to attack Tokyo, although this was a dangerous mission because of the length of the flight necessary to make the trip. The standard Army Air Corps planes were not capable of such a long flight. A partnership between the Army and Navy was necessary. The Navy would sail the bombers into the Pacific, where they would take off from the carriers, bomb Tokyo and four other locations and then fly into China. Because of the secrecy of the mission, when the participants signed up they knew little more than they were signing up for an important and dangerous mission. The American public was subsequently told by President Roosevelt that the planes took off from a mysterious "Shangri-La" location and it was not for another year and two days before the War Department would disclose that the Shangri-La location was an aircraft carrier in the Pacific.

In the War Department's official communiqué, the government described the decision to bomb Tokyo and four other Japanese cities:

The objective of the sixteen North American B-25 medium bombers was to attack definite selected points -- armament plants, dock yards, railroad yards and oil refineries -- in Tokyo, Yokohama, Nagoya, Kope, and Osaka....

The preparation for the raid on Japan, first conceived in January 1942, was carried out in the utmost secrecy with thoroughness extending to the most minute details....

It was the first time that medium bombers of the Army were to take off in numbers from an aircraft carrier of the Navy....<sup>2</sup>

There is still much debate as to whether the Savanna Depot knew the bombs they were making would be used in the bombing of Japan. It can be said that the regular civilian employees who packed the bombs did not know their destination. However, it was the practice of the time to stencil the letters SOD on all ammunition produced at the Depot. It was not until much later that someone noticed in a photograph that showed the packing of Major Doolittle's plane the letters SOD and connected the bombs to the Savanna Ordnance Depot.

But one can infer from events that the Depot command did know the purpose of these bombs. In addition, these bombs were specially made with a higher charge. According to Capt. Ted Lawson, a participant in the raids and the author of the book Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo, the crew was briefed in advance:

We learned about the 500-pounders from a Colonel in Ordnance. He was flown to Eglin [Florida, the site of the crew's training,] to speak to us on bombs. He took great delight in letting us know that instead of the usual charge of 35%, he was making up the special 500-pounders with a 50% charge.<sup>3</sup>

The Doolittle raid was also depicted in the classic film "Thirty Seconds over Tokyo." The fame of this "battle" has induced some serious bragging by some Depot employees. The connection between the Depot and this raid has had positive repercussions on the labor force at the Depot for the past fifty years.

Savanna also claimed some other important contributions to the war, including an ammunition handling safety school. Savanna Army Depot became one of three Unit Training Centers (Aberdeen and Raritan were the other two) in the summer of 1940 when the Ordnance Corp determined that training of Ordnance personnel was necessary. Ten ammunition companies were scheduled to come to Savanna for training in ammunition handling. The first five arrived in February 1941 and stayed through May. The second group of five units came in June and posed a significant problem. Because a large number of the draftees could not read at the requisite level, their companies could not pass the training test. Being able to read the labels on the boxes was one part of the requirements for graduation. However, these units remained at Savanna as ammunition

handlers because of the severe labor shortage until the end of the year. The UTC was deactivated in January 1942. The Ordnance Corps was then in a quandary over whose responsibility it was to train the units -- the combat services or technical services? Nevertheless, in order to house this project, thirty-seven buildings had been built: barracks, mess halls, recreation buildings, unit headquarters, guard houses, storage facilities and classroom space. Many of these buildings were subsequently used for other purposes and later by the Reserves and National Guard.<sup>4</sup>

In 1941, Savanna Ordnance Depot had also been given the task of studying and developing more effective methods of loading and transporting all types of ammunition and explosives safely. This included loading, bracing and shipping in trucks and rail cars. This was the beginning of a long history of involvement in explosives safety that has been connected to the Savanna Ordnance Depot.

Some other inventions that had at least partial involvement with the Depot during World War II include DDT testing and the two-way radio. Perhaps the biggest claim to fame during WWII, besides Jimmy Doolittle's raids, was the development of two-way radio use by locomotives by commanding officer L.P. Crim. Crim envisioned the two-way radio as a means of communication between a train engineer and dispatcher. Before the use of the radio, emergency orders were sent by car. The two-way radio allowed for substantial savings in gasoline, manpower and rubber tires.

The Depot also tested DDT on the vicious Mississippi backwater mosquitos. In the fall of 1949 the Army was testing DDT as an insect killer in the hope that it would be useful against the spread of the disease infantile paralysis or Polio. The spraying was done from an Army bomber plane and reflected the new trend of using military aircraft for other government and civil purposes. Because the work was done by city employees under the supervision of the Rockford, Illinois, and U.S. Public Health Service departments, this project also reflected the growing cooperation between the military and other governmental offices. Little did they know at the time that DDT would become an environmental hazard to birds and subsequently be banned.

The Army encouraged inventive thinking by Depot employees with War Department citations and cash bonuses prorated to the amount of money the Army would save by using their inventions. A delinking machine was invented by supervising machinist Earl Griswold in order to aid in the delinking of shells from belts. The invention netted Mr. Griswold \$200. This was one of many machines and tools invented by employees during the war.<sup>5</sup>

#### The Impact of the Depot on the Area

While the activities of the Depot and its personnel played important roles in the military aspects of the war, they also impacted on the civilian life in the Savanna area.

As Major Charles Baxter had pointed out in 1918 in his memo on the possibility of hiring civilians, the key to any such plan would be suitable housing. As World War II brought more civilians into the Depot workforce, the need for low cost and convenient civilian housing became evident. Finally the Army acted to remedy the situation; the first steps was the Craig Manor apartment complex.

Craig Manor, named after the founding father of the city of Hanover, James Craig, was a 200 apartment complex built to satisfy the housing shortages in the area as well as the needs of the Depot. According to Terry J. Miller in his book Hanover, the dream became a reality on 25 November 1940 when word was sent by the Federal Works Agency in Washington, D.C. that a 40 acre tract outside of Hanover was approved for purchase. The housing project opened over one year later on 9 December 1941, two days after the attack on Pearl Harbor. At that time all 200 apartments were filled and a waiting list was created to keep track of the many families who hoped to make their homes in this complex.

The atmosphere of the complex was very community oriented. According to Harriet Bearsley, who lived in Craig Manor shortly after the war, the Craig Manor housing was very much alive with the sounds of community. The residents were often young couples, so there were many children in the complex, giving a youthful atmosphere to the place. Craig Manor apartments were the "starter apartments" for many young families in the area. After the war, Craig Manor continued to house these people. During the Korean conflict, 1950-1953 the complex was again filled to capacity with Depot employees and then young veterans. Craig Manor was subsequently sold to a private interest, Project Inc., Chicago who ran and operated the complex.<sup>6</sup>

Black Hawk village was another World War II housing complex located just outside the Depot, seven miles northwest of Savanna. The housing complex sat on 41.49 acres of land and was a residential community that included a park and tennis courts. In an article in the Elizabeth Weekly News on 18 November 1942 it was stated that the housing project would hopefully alleviate "a critical shortage in dwelling space which has forced many ordnance plant workers to live at considerable distance from the proving ground."<sup>7</sup> The Army officially took ownership on 13 January 1943 and ownership was transferred to the Savanna Depot on 4 February 1948.

Black Hawk housing project had its own civilian advisory board which would make recommendations to the Army. Some of their recommendations included increased lighting and recreational activities. The residents also formed social organizations to plan activities for the residents such as block parties and Christmas caroling.

The Depot closed the facility on 30 June 1959 and sold the land and building to the city of Savanna on 20 September 1976. All of the structures were torn down and the land was sold to individuals who subsequently built new housing on the site. The Black

Hawk housing project had relieved the critical shortage of housing in the area during the Second World War, but after that period its purpose subsided and it faded away.

Social activities at the Depot abounded during the Second World War. Military personnel had at their disposal a theater, bowling alley, gymnasium, pool, and outdoor tennis facilities. In addition, a full USO was running in Savanna for the recreational activities of military personnel. The USO held the traditional dances and teas, operated a snack bar on base and held a Junior Hostess program involving local young women. These activities tied the community to the Depot and allowed for continued support of the military personnel. The USO was active from 27 May 1942 until 16 November 1945. According to a short article in The Clinton Herald, the organization served 173,932 servicemen and their wives at the snack bar alone. The USO's group activities were attended by 97,000 and 14,000 servicemen used their information service.

The Depot also had ties to local civil organizations. Various commanders and officials spoke at the Rotary and Lion's Clubs throughout the duration of the war. The topics of their talks ranged from current activities at the Depot to presentations on their previous tours of duties. The weekly meetings also allowed the various commanders to dispel rumors and provided for what served as press conferences on many subjects. Newspapers throughout the area would simultaneously report on what was said at the Lion's Club and Rotary meetings by each of the commanders. When a new commander took office, a visit to the Lion's and Rotary Clubs was not only appropriate, it was expected.

Social activities at the Depot were generally not attended by the civilian personnel who were employed at the Depot. The feeling among many of these employees was that the Depot primarily was where they worked. From the moment they set foot on the grounds until they left, they were engaged in their duties. When the war was as stressful as making and loading ammunition, they often wanted to separate their personal and professional lives. The exception to this pattern was the employees who lived in either Black Hawk village or the Craig Manor Housing projects. Because their homes were related to the Depot and they lived amongst other employees, their social lives tended to be tied to the Depot as well. Many of their activities revolved around the season, Christmas walks and caroling, Halloween parties and during the summer all types of outdoor activities and barbecues.<sup>8</sup>

The impact of the wartime activities at the Depot and in the Black Hawk and Craig Manor housing projects illustrated a variation on the Army saying "learn and live"; otherwise, we die." The military personnel and the civilian employees did learn many important lessons in how to work together, concentrate on a common goal, and contribute their individual skills and talents. In the end they were as much a part of the victories in World War II as the Doolittle bombardiers, the Artillery companies at Cassino, and the Ordnance planners in Washington, D.C.

### Endnotes for Chapter Four

1. Michael D. Doubler, Closing with the Enemy: How GIs Fought the War in Europe, 1944-1945 (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 1 (quotation from WD pamphlet), 18, and 19 (quotations). See Appendix A, U.S. Army Organization and Weaponry, for weapons of World War II and their implications for Ordnance logistics.
2. War Department official communiqué, 20 April 1943, as reprinted in Ted W. Lawson, Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo (New York: Random House, 1943), 193-201 (quotation on pp. 193 and 194).
3. Lawson, Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo, p. 27.
4. Unit Training Center report (Savanna Ordnance Depot files); Ordnance School Pamphlet No. 2, "Brief History of the Ordnance Department" (Aberdeen, MD: Ordnance School, Aberdeen Proving Ground, April 1950), 12-17; and Constance McLaughlin Green et. al., United States Army in World War II: The Technical Services - The Ordnance Department: Planning Munitions for War (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1985).
5. Savanna Army Depot Activity, Savanna Ordnance Depot files, scrapbooks, and reports covering World War II; Clinton Herald, 17 November 1945.
6. Terry J. Miller, Hanover (commemorative history); interview with Harriet Bearsley, February 1996.
7. Elizabeth (Illinois) Weekly News, 18 November 1942.
8. Interviews with former employees. (Tapes of the interviews for the Savanna Depot project were deposited with the History Department, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois.) Savanna Times-Journal, 26 October 1945 and Clinton Herald, 17 November 1945.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Post World War II and the Korean War

The rapid demobilization of the Army following the end of World War II posed problems similar to the end of World War I. The Army had vast stocks of weapons and ammunition scattered around the world but a shortage of personnel to either maintain, consolidate, or store it. President Truman's administration put a priority on balanced budgets, reductions in the national debt, and avoidance of any new taxes. Congress was not interested in universal military training and agreed to "unification" of the armed forces primarily as a budget control measure. As historian Clay Blair has summed up the situation, "in truth the American Army was once again in dreadful shape. In June 1950 it was far below its previously authorized strength of 677,000. It actually numbered only 591,000."<sup>1</sup> The North Korean invasion of South Korea on 25 June 1950 changed the situation. Truman's decision to intervene in support of the Republic of Korea (South Korea) armed forces cast the United States into a three year ordeal of fighting what the Chief of Staff of the United States Army, General J. Lawton Collins, called a "war in peacetime." In this situation the Ordnance supply system faced a number of problems. Not only were the ammunition stocks scattered, below strength in some items, and underfunded, but the prospect of a quick buildup was hampered by the legacy of the past. "More importantly," according to Collins, "the lack of postwar procurement of ammunition [had] caused most of the principal wartime manufacturers to convert their plants and machine tools to meet the surging demand for consumer goods that World War II had held in check."<sup>2</sup> Could the United States afford both "guns and butter"? Once again the Army had to turn to its depot system for answers.

At the close of World War II the Savanna Ordnance Depot had experienced a reduction in force. The high production level brought about by wartime needs was no longer necessary, so the force had been reduced to align with the peacetime mission of this military establishment. The Depot had returned to its peacetime routine of receiving, diffusing and storing ammunition brought to Savanna; it had continued to operate smoothly and peacefully during the post-war era until a seemingly quiet evening in 1948. At precisely 8:50 p.m. on 21 January 1948 an explosion of an igloo storage magazine which held anti-tank mines occurred at the Savanna Depot. The high explosives stored in the igloo contained both TNT and tetryl and ripped a crater into the earth approximately 100 feet in diameter and 50 feet deep. The effect of the blast was felt throughout the surrounding areas and even showed on seismic readings as far away as Chicago.

The hardest hit community was that of Hanover, Illinois. According to reports on the blast, "every plate glass window in the town was blown out, and folks in the Hanover theater said the blast raised them six inches off their seats. It blew a calf out a barn as well, but the animal was uninjured."<sup>3</sup> In interviews about the explosion nearly fifty years later residents from the area still remembered the events vividly. Wayne Harmon, a

resident of Mount Carroll, said, "I was home that night. We were in Mount Carroll and I'll tell you, well, everybody in town thought their furnace blew up."<sup>4</sup>

According to Colonel Leland A. Burbank, Commanding Officer at the Depot, in an interview with a local reporter several years after the actual explosion, the structure of the igloos helped to cushion the blow. "At the Depot, igloo munitions storage units are staggered underground at different distances apart. This is in case one exploded, the others would not be detonated." In addition, the igloo magazines extend under the ground with only the domes visible. These domes were then covered with earth and vegetation to make them invisible from the air. This camouflage was particularly important because of security issues and the fear of the surrounding towns concerning the possibility of an atomic attack. Because the Savanna Ordnance Depot was one of the world's largest ammunition depots there was fear expressed by concerned citizens over what would happen if an enemy A-bomb hit the Depot. In the same interview, the reporter summarized Colonel Burbank's answer on this issue. "An atomic bomb might detonate two or three magazines, but there would be no chain explosion the Colonel explained. The magazines are so properly spaced that an A-blast would involve only those directly hit by the bomb. Probably, that would be only two or three, he declared."<sup>5</sup>

#### Impact of the Korean War on Savanna Depot

While activity at the Depot had decreased somewhat at the end of World War II, the production and storage of materials began to increase once again during June 1950 to June 1953. The rise in the Depot's work force was to keep up with its new wartime mission and responsibilities. This increase was also the result of the Defense Department's decision just prior to the Korean War to increase the storage facilities for ammunition. In addition, the Depot stored strategic materials such as the rare earths Monazite, Manganese, and Zinc.<sup>6</sup>

Another significant aspect of the Depot's work during the Korean period was the activation of the Ordnance Ammunition, Surveillance, and Maintenance School in 1950. This school was located on the Depot's property directly across the railroad tracks that separated the upper and lower posts. The school provided technical, operational, and administrative training in all fields of ammunition for civilian and military students from the United States and foreign countries. The school was in charge of providing training support for operating personnel through resident courses and mobile training teams. Most of this training was conducted on-site, which resulted in a significant cost savings of travel funds. Normally two instructors went to the installation requiring training and remained at that installation until all personnel had received the required training. With the activation of the school all training could be localized to one specific installation.

During the Korean War, 1950-1953, the Depot had maintained a force of 3,000 and activity had been again thriving on wartime activity and needs. However, with the cease fire in June 1953 there was no longer a need to maintain the work force at

maximum capacity. Therefore, a decision was made by the Defense Department that the Depot would have to reduce its force by 1,600 by 30 June 1954. The first lay-offs began in January 1954 and affected approximately 150 employees. Of this number, about one half were female. All of the employees involved in the separation were on indefinite status and were primarily production personnel.<sup>7</sup>

Such reductions in the work force inevitably caused anxiety and concern among the personnel. The commanding officer of the Depot, Colonel Burbank, addressed these concerns in the Depot's newsletter, The Sod Buster, in January 1954:

You must realize that the Savanna Ordnance Depot exists only to support our Armed Forces and our National Defense Policy. We are going through a reduction in force brought about by a reduction in requirements for our product due to secession of hostilities of the Korean War. The workload diminishes when hostilities cease therefore it becomes necessary to reduce personnel. The new ceiling authorization which has been established and or a curtailment of funds primarily in demilitarization and renovation activities is the necessity for approximately 150 depot employees being effected in the recent reduction in force.<sup>8</sup>

The curtailment of activity continued into February 1954. At this time the Chamber of Commerce of Savanna elected to render a protest in Washington, D.C. against further lay-offs. The Chamber appointed two businessmen from the area to serve as its delegates to Washington, D.C. to talk with legislators regarding defense activities. The two delegates were H. P. Grecian, a Savanna insurance and real estate dealer, and Russell Sharp, a retail butcher. The two representatives asked the legislators that defense work not be channelled away from the Ordnance Depot into private industry. They also asked that other depots not be favored over the Savanna Depot. Furthermore, Savanna collected letters in support of its petition from neighboring Illinois and Iowa towns and cities.<sup>9</sup>

In March 1954 with employment already down to 2,000 at the Depot, the Savanna Chamber of Commerce invited Colonel Burbank to speak at a dinner meeting on the issue. At this meeting Colonel Burbank addressed the Chamber's concern over the privatization of work projects. He stated that of the manufacturing still needed, private industry would get a large share because of the policy of keeping private plants prepared and operating for future contingencies. He pointed out, however, that the operations at the Savanna Ordnance Depot were efficient, and that the manufacturing that was needed would be distributed on the basis of efficiency in competition with other similar installations. The Savanna Ordnance Depot thus would get its fair share of whatever ordnance work was still to be done.<sup>10</sup>

Even though a reduction in work force was necessary in 1954, the Savanna Ordnance Depot was proud of the fact that it did not discriminate in employment in

such difficult times. The policy of the Savanna Ordnance Depot had been to give employment to those who sought it, regardless of race, creed or physical handicap. The policy was, "if you qualified, you could be employed." This policy employed the physically handicapped whenever possible. This aspect was most notable in the machine shop tool room. Under the supervision of Chris M. Gantenbein, Jr., foreman of the shops, and Thomas L. Kujawa, shop foreman, the machine shop employed two physically handicapped persons as tool repairmen. The tool room was one of the most important sections in the machine shop. It was the job of the tool repairman to supply the proper tools and determine not only that the tools were serviceable but also the correct tools and safe for the job when they were issued. The tool repairman had to know tools, their purpose, and method of using them. He had to determine the responsibility of the workman to whom he issued the tool to as well. Finally, he had to see that the tools were properly returned and, if damaged, repair them and make them serviceable when practical.<sup>11</sup>

The Depot was extremely proud of the work done by these workers and displayed their efforts in articles in local papers. In addition to these two men in the tool room, the Depot had 90 handicapped employees throughout the post. In an interview, a former employee, Richard E. Smith, recalled some memories of these workers. He remembered that some of the handicapped employees were veterans, but that the biggest share were civilians.<sup>12</sup>

#### Old Realities and New Challenges in the Cold War

As the Cold War years progressed, with the emphasis on atomic defense and the possibility of nuclear warfare, there was an additional concern that the TNT bombs prepared at the Savanna Ordnance Depot would become outdated and, as a result, activity and employment at the Depot would be further reduced. Colonel Burbank also addressed this concern with the Savanna Chamber of Commerce in March 1954. The questions addressed at this meeting concerned the possible change from the conventional bombs and artillery shells to nuclear weapons and the consequent lack of use for present equipment at the Savanna plants. Colonel Burbank responded by noting, "Warfare is changing as it changed from World Wars I and II from foot soldier to mechanized. So it is changing from artillery to the guided missile and rocket. But it is likely to be TNT that will be delivered to an enemy by these new means." Furthermore, he then emphasized the fact that "there were few targets worth the expense of attack by nuclear weapons. The Savanna Ordnance Depot would not be included in the enemy's list of atom bomb targets. Bridges in the area and railroad installations would be more important targets, he indicated, though, not of course atom missile targets." Through this statement he hoped to alleviate mounting concerns and questions brought by the public.<sup>13</sup>

In the spring of 1954 another form of artillery was brought for storage at the

Depot, Nike missiles. The Nike missiles were guided missiles that could streak into space, seek out enemy bombers, and destroy them no matter how fast they flew or what evasive action their pilots may take against them. The missile was approximately 20 feet long and a foot thick over most of its length with fins to stabilize it in flight. To launch the weapon it was placed on a horizontal launching rail that was elevated to a vertical position. Then the missile could be fired from a booster rocket which dropped away when the missile was several hundred feet in the air. At this point the missile's own liquid fuel rocket propulsion system began driving it on its way.<sup>14</sup>

With the arrival of the Nike missiles and continuing cold war tensions, security was an issue that the Depot needed to constantly address. The Commanding Officer in 1954, Colonel Burbank, addressed concerned citizens in a statement issued in the Savanna Times Journal on 9 April 1954. The statement was issued to all contractors and service organizations performing work at the Depot and concerned the possibility of the leaking of classified information to outside sources:

The Security of the United States is the responsibility of every citizen of the country whether employed by the government, performing work for the government under contract or doing any kind of work of mutual benefit. Frequently, due to the competitive rivalry between groups of workmen, between contractors or through plain thoughtlessness, technical information of a military nature, furnished by the government and necessary in the performance of the work is disclosed. Disclosure of sensitive information to unauthorized persons presents a grave danger to our national security. Every employee of this Depot, military and civilian, every contractor engaged in government work, all personnel entering Savanna Ordnance Depot to perform a service is hereby cautioned that the disclosing of classified information, is subject to prosecution. It is further requested that all contractors bring the contents of this memorandum to the attention of all their employees.<sup>15</sup>

Another area closely related to security was safety. This concerned citizens living in the immediate area surrounding the Depot. Several towns had expressed concern over possible damage in an explosion. The Depot had sent representatives to explain the situation, but the issue was not resolved. In December 1954, under the direction of Colonel Burbank, the Depot undertook a study on the possibility of structural damage to buildings in surrounding towns. This type of study was brought to the attention of the Depot by an Explosive Research Group from the University of Utah, which had done a similar study in December 1952 entitled "Air Shock Intensity on the Demolition Range at Tooele Ordnance Depot." This study was pertinent to the Savanna Depot because the Depot had as one of its missions the destruction of obsolete, irreparable or deteriorated items of ammunition. This study helped to alleviate some of the fears of the surrounding towns.

In summary, by the end of the decade, 1945 to 1955, the Savanna Ordnance Depot had gone through the cycle of war, peace, war, and peace. The Korean War had

created new problems. General Collins summarized it as learning to fight "a new type of limited war in peacetime, combined with political considerations that demanded 'guns and butter,'" and, at the same time, having to deal with "shortages in depot and theater stocks in the Far East in the last two years of the war."<sup>16</sup> Yet peace had its problems, too. Community leaders and ordinary citizens were concerned with such issues as employment levels, safety, and security. Caught in the middle between changing Department of Defense policies and the political priorities of the decade, the people of the Savanna Ordnance Depot and the surrounding areas adapted as best they could and focused on the future.

### Endnotes for Chapter Five

1. Clay Blair, The Forgotten War: America in Korea, 1950-1953 (New York: Times Books, 1987), 6-11 and 27-28 (quotation).
2. J. Lawton Collins, War in Peacetime: The History and Lessons of Korea (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), 318-22 (quotation on p. 319).
3. Democrat Times, 17 January 1954, p. 26.
4. Interview with Wayne Harmon, Mount Carroll, Illinois. (Tape recordings of interviews for this report have been deposited in the History Department, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois.)
5. Democrat Times, 17 January 1954, p. 26.
6. Savanna Ordnance Depot, Special Orders file, 1953 (National Archives, Great Lakes Region, Chicago, Illinois.)
7. Savanna Times Journal, 26 November 1974, p. 9.
8. Savanna Ordnance Depot, Sod Buster, January 1954.
9. Bellevue Herald, 15 February 1954.
10. Savanna Times Journal, 3 March 1954.
11. Savanna Times Journal, 19 January 1954.
12. Interview with Richard E. Smith.
13. Stockton Herald News, 18 March 1954.
14. Bellevue Herald, 13 May 1954.
15. Savanna Times Journal, 9 April 1954.
16. Collins, War in Peacetime, p. 321 (quotation).

## CHAPTER SIX

### Adjusting to the Atomic era and the Viet Nam War

The Korean War was similar to World War II in its weapons, tactics, and impact on the Ordnance supply system but problems were faced on an increased scale. As General J. Lawton Collins, the Army Chief of Staff, summarized the situation, "expenditures of artillery ammunition, particularly of the heavy calibers required to root out the enemy from his deeply dug defenses, rose astronomically." He noted that "one battalion of twelve howitzers set a new record by firing 14,425 rounds of 105 mm shell in twenty-four hours, whereas in World War II the average was 480 rounds at forty rounds per gun per day."<sup>1</sup> Similar experience characterized the expenditure of small arms ammunition, particularly given the limits of standard American weapons. By the time the war ground to a halt with a cease fire in June 1953 the newly inaugurated Eisenhower administration had come to a basic, and drastic, policy decision. Under political pressure to reduce defense spending, they would rely on air delivered nuclear power to deter potential enemies. This "massive retaliation" policy promised, in the words of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, "... more basic security at less cost." The Center of Military History has concluded that "under the circumstances, much of the military procurement budget was devoted to the nuclear threat with relatively little allocated to provide for the possibility of limited conventional war." In spite of attempts at "unification" of the military, each of the services scrambled to develop its own atomic weapons and strategies during the period 1953-1960.<sup>2</sup>

### Savanna Ordnance Depot in the Massive Retaliation era and the early phases of the Viet Nam War

In 1961, the Depot was assigned a special weapons mission. The special operations that were conducted at the Depot were done strictly by military units. However, there was some knowledge of the special weapons stored there among the civilian employees. In an interview with Wayne Harmon, he called: "They had missiles in there by the hundreds." Harmon also recalled that it was fairly common knowledge that missiles were being made and stored at the Depot. However, when civilian employees did enter the special weapons zone, as Harmon did when he replaced batteries, they were escorted in and out by military personnel.<sup>3</sup>

The process of storing the missiles was an extremely complex process. According to Harmon the process involved a cradle manufactured by the machine shop at the Depot. "It took them months to get this thing [cradle] made up because it was all made out of aluminum and the heat from setting it out overnight would cause the cradle to expand and contract." The missiles, once assembled in the cradle, were then stored in special igloo magazines. These igloos had to be kept at room temperature year round.<sup>4</sup>

During the early phases of the Viet Nam War, the Depot once again saw an increase in traditional activity. According to American Military History, "between 1961 and 1964 the Army's strength rose from about 850,000 to nearly a million men, and the number of combat divisions grew from eleven to sixteen. These increases were backed up by an ambitious program to modernize Army equipment and, by stockpiling supplies and equipment at forward bases, to increase deployability and readiness of Army combat forces."<sup>5</sup> As a result there was an increase in military contracts, and an increase in standard production at the Savanna Army Depot. The Army under President Kennedy underwent a "shift in military policy which stressed the need for ready nonnuclear forces as a deterrent to limited war." President Kennedy backed this policy of "flexible response" and, as a result, the "massive retaliation" doctrine of the 1950s was officially deemphasized. Therefore, there was less need for the Savanna Depot to build up its supply of special weapons which were currently being stored there.<sup>6</sup>

During this shift in policy, the Savanna Ordnance Depot also went through a name change that reflected its new status. In 1962 the official designation was changed from the Savanna Ordnance Depot to the Savanna Army Depot. In 1966 the Ordnance Ammunition, Surveillance, and Maintenance School was renamed the Army Material Command Ammunition School. In 1971 DARCOM - United States Army Material Development and Readiness Command Ammunition Center was designated as a collateral activity at Savanna.

The new weapons, new tactics of counterinsurgency, helicopter mobility, and operational unity of command all promised to overcome the limitations of the Korean War experience. But, inspite of massive support by logistical elements and savage fighting, the result was once again a stalemate, cease fire, and strategic withdrawal. An attempt to operate on a "guns and butter" economy had unleashed inflation; an unpopular draft and unclear goals had divided public opinion and eroded congressional support. The policy of "Vietnamization" provided for "withdrawal of a half-million American soldiers" and a reliance on training, supplying, and supporting the South Vietnam army. "In early 1973 the United States, North and South Vietnam, and the Viet Cong signed an armistice that promised a cease-fire and national reconciliation." In the long run neither would occur and South Vietnam would lose its struggle.<sup>7</sup>

With the phasing out of American troops from Vietnam and the cease fire/peace settlement in 1973, the Depot underwent several reductions in their force. The Savanna Times Journal first noted a large reduction in force on 26 November 1974 when employment was reduced by 244 employees. At this time it was also reported that the reductions would continue over a two year period. This time frame would provide a necessary cushion to alert employees to the necessary cutbacks. It also allowed for the Depot to concentrate on efforts to properly assist any displaced employees.

The citizens of Savanna, upon hearing of these cutbacks, joined together once again as they had at the close of the Korean conflict in an effort to counteract these

reductions. Together they established a committee designated as the "Save the Army Depot Committee" and contacted their local, state, and congressional representatives. Representatives Tom Railsback and John Anderson became involved and began sending telegrams to the Secretary of Defense Arthur Schlesinger. They submitted facts in hopes of retaining the mission of the Depot; however, at the time the Army was reducing the missions of all Depots throughout the United States. Railsback reported this news to the citizens of Savanna in an article in the Savanna Times Journal: "The Savanna Army Depot will become a conventional ammunition mission instead of a [special weapons] one. The Army is attempting to orient supplies on the East and West coasts and the Southeastern part of the United States." As a result, the Depot began a steady deployment of their special weapons stocks to other locations. (This process was completed on 27 June 1975.)<sup>8</sup>

Although the citizens of Savanna had been caught off guard by drastic reductions in force, the commander of the Depot, Colonel George Ford, was aware of the possible reduction. In a statement in the local paper, 26 November 1974, Colonel Ford stated that the "cutback order came as no surprise." He then went on to say that his concern was concentrated on "where and when they want to reach that point." A briefing team from Washington, D.C. was expected to arrive in December 1974 to help clear up these details.<sup>9</sup>

The crisis over the status of the Depot came to a head in 1975-1976. Several issues were at stake: (1) the future of DARCOM, (2) personnel levels, and (3) control of the Savanna Depot. The "Study on Relocation of US Army Material Development and Readiness Command Ammunition Center" on 31 March 1976 concluded that the DARCOM Ammunition Center "should be retained as an entity and that if, in fact, relocation [was] required, the most suitable site would be the Navy Ammunition Depot at McAlester, Oklahoma." McAlester was a prime location because it had been designated as both an Ammunition Depot as well as an Ammunition Plant. For the moment, the decision was pending, but not final. By 30 June 1976 the two year phased reduction in personnel at Savanna had been completed. On 1 July 1976 the command and control of Savanna Army Depot was transferred to Letterkenny Army Depot in Chambersberg, Pennsylvania, and Savanna was renamed the Savanna Army Depot Activity. Activity status was not something new, however, as Savanna had had such status once before in 1918.<sup>10</sup>

After the initial two year phased reduction had been completed, the DARCOM report put on hold, and control of Savanna shifted to Letterkenny, the "Save the Army Depot Committee" in August 1976 invited Railsback and his aide, Linda G. Stephenson, to tour the Savanna Army Depot Activity. The purpose of this tour was to gain first-hand information about the facilities. In addition District Representative Rich Court also viewed the facilities at this time. Following the tour of the Depot, both Stephenson and Court met with the mayor of Savanna, Don Nehrkorn, who headed up the "Save the Army Depot Committee." The committee then invited Illinois Senator Charles Percy to

tour the Depot the following month. Senator Percy was given a thorough land and air tour of the facilities and was extremely impressed with what he saw.

Time, however, seemed to be running out for the Savanna Army Depot Activity. A decision from Washington, D.C. for the closing of the Depot was expected to be presented on 1 January 1977. The committee felt that information about the Depot's need were not reaching the appropriate decision-making level. They also voiced their concerns about the lack of production contracts appropriated by the Secretary of the Army, Martin Hoffmann. In their complaint, they stated that since 1973 "everything [contracts] was going out, but nothing was coming in."<sup>11</sup> For example, the special weapons contract had been transferred to the Sierra installation in Herlong, California. The committee was particularly upset over this deployment because they felt that the government was favoring Sierra over Savanna. In fact, the committee reported that the government spent \$9,000,000 on the Sierra installation compared to the \$1,000,000 for Savanna. In addition to the deployment of the special weapons, civil defense equipment was also being transferred to Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Montana. This equipment consisted of water pumps, pipes for flood control, and emergency water supplies. This came about because Congress had failed to appropriate funds in support of the Civil Defense Preparedness Agency. Therefore, its management was decentralized and transferred to state civil defense departments. This move thus ended the fifty-nine year history of the Savanna Depot providing help for Mississippi River floods.<sup>12</sup>

Another means for the committee to protest against the possible closing of the Depot was to contact the lawmakers in Washington, D.C. to emphasize the need for the ammunition school, DARCOM, to be housed on the Depot's property. They submitted a study and socio-economic report on DARCOM by Anderson's aide, Allen Gibson, to the Secretary of the Army. They then invited distinguished military guests from foreign countries to attest to the high standards maintained by the ammunition school. One such guest to the school was Chan Choong, the Assistant to the Director of Logistics from the Republic of Singapore. During his visit to DARCOM, Choong went through orientation of the United States ammunition logistics system. Upon the completion of this orientation, Choong attested to the wealth of expertise and the high quality of the facilities maintained by DARCOM.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, after thirty years of activity, 1946-1976, the Savanna Ordnance Depot Activity had experienced the cycles of build-up during times of war and reductions-in-force during times of peace. These were natural differences of perspective and priority between military and civilian personnel. The military tended to think in terms of changing missions, the impact of new technologies, and the needs of the Defense Department and military establishment. Savanna Ordnance Depot Activity was a temporary duty for them or an assignment after which they would move on to other challenges. The civilians in the Savanna area, particularly the political representatives, tended to think in terms of the local economy, the employment possibilities, and the

needs of their families or communities. For them, Savanna was a permanent place or a step on the road toward retirement. To help themselves while helping their country was a reasonable proposition. In the crisis of 1974-1976, the military and civilian personnel all worked together within the limits of their individual situations.<sup>14</sup> And they were successful. The Depot would not be closed. Somewhat reduced in scope and functions, it would continue to function for another twenty years. The committee to "Save the Army Depot", the political representatives, and the military had all done their jobs.

#### END NOTES FOR CHAPTER SIX

1. J. Lawton Collins, War in Peacetime: The History and Lessons of Korea (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), 320.
2. Clay Blair, The Forgotten War: America in Korea, 1950-1953 (New York: Times Books, 1987), 430-31 and chapter 27; Center of Military History, American Military History (Washington, D.C.: United States Army, 1989), 573-84 (quotation by Dulles on p. 573 and quotation on procurement budget on p. 582).
3. Interview with Wayne Harmon. (The tapes of interviews for this report are retained by the History Department, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois.)
4. Ibid.
5. American Military History, 628.
6. Ibid., 591 (quotation).
7. Ibid., Chapter 28 (quotation on Vietnamization on p. 675 and on armistice, p. 688).
8. Savanna Times Journal, 26 November 1974, p. 5.
9. Ibid., p. 9.
10. "Study on Relocation of US Army Material Development and Readiness Command," 31 March 1976; and Savanna Army Depot Activity, Savanna Army Depot (pamphlet, 1995), 6.
11. Savanna Times Journal, 7 September 1976, p. 1.
12. Savanna Times Journal, 26 September 1976, p. 12.
13. Savanna Times Journal, 12 October 1976.
14. For the different perspectives of civilian and military personnel and institutions, see Conal Furay, The Grass-Roots Mind in America: The American Sense of Absolutes (New York: New Viewpoints/Franklin Watts, 1977), chapters 3 and 4.

## POSTSCRIPT

### The End of the Cold War and the BRAC Decision

For twenty years after the changes of 1976 the Savanna Army Depot Activity quietly fulfilled its missions of "the receipt, storage, issue and demilitarization of conventional ammunition, and general supplies" and of "manufacturing, procuring and maintaining ammunition peculiar equipment and repair parts for worldwide [Department of Defense] support." The collateral activities of DARCOM ammunition school also continued but did undergo reorganization. On 17 January 1979 it was designated the U.S. Army Defense Ammunition Center and School (USADACS).<sup>1</sup> But the world was changing and so were the defense policies of the United States. An agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union in 1979 to limit the strategic weapons of each (SALT-II) was an indication of things to come. And a rapidly growing budget deficit prompted Congress in 1985 to pass the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act which set debt ceilings and mandatory budget cuts if they were not met. In 1987 the United States and the Soviet Union signed the Intermediate Nuclear Force Treaty which provided for the mutual destruction and verification of medium-range missiles. Then in December 1989 Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union met with President Bush on the island of Malta and declared that the Cold War was over. Within three years, Gorbachev was out of power, the Soviet Union had collapsed, and the United States would confront the new world of regional conflicts in the Persian Gulf War (1991) and the crisis in the former Yugoslavia.<sup>2</sup> So by 1996 the United States was back to where it had been in 1916 in the preparedness debate. What kind of a military establishment did the country need, how much could it afford to spend, and what roles should arsenals, depots, and reserve components play in the military?

The Savanna Army Depot Activity faced these realities in the form of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment commission commonly known as BRAC. The first such commission was appointed in 1988 and recommended the closure of sixteen major facilities. Once these recommendations would be fully implemented by the 1996 fiscal year, its recommendations would reportedly have saved U.S. taxpayers an estimated \$700,000,000 per year. In 1990 Congress stipulated that the BRAC commission's role was one of review according to the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act. Given the previous political pressure and lobbying efforts whenever an installation was scheduled for closure, Congress agreed to an elaborate process to isolate its role and to specify the President's options. The responsibility for developing closure and realignment recommendations rested with the Department of Defense. The Department of Defense would make recommendations for closures based upon two public documents. The first of these public documents was the long-term force structure plan; this plan would be the basis for determining installation needs. The second public document was the selection criteria that would be applied to rank bases in categories where there was excess capacity.<sup>3</sup>

The next step in the decision making process was that the BRAC recommendations would be reviewed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Next, the recommendations determined by these two offices were forwarded by the Secretary of Defense to the BRAC commission. The commission was made up of eight individuals who were appointed by the President of the United States. This commission was in charge of reviewing these recommendations and submitting them to the President and then to Congress for "bloc" approval.

In selecting military installations for closure, the BRAC commission in 1995 used the following eight criteria. First, they analyzed the current and future mission requirements and the impact on operational readiness of the Department of Defense's total force. Second, the availability and condition of land, facilities and airspace. Third, the ability to accommodate contingency, mobilization, and future total force requirements at both the existing locations and potential receiving locations. Fourth, the cost and manpower implications. Fifth, the extent, number of years, and timing of potential costs and savings, beginning with the date of completion of the closure or realignment and the length of time necessary for the savings to exceed the costs. Sixth, the economic impact on communities. Seventh, the ability of both the existing and potential receiving communities' infrastructure to support forces, missions and personnel. Eighth, the environmental impact.<sup>4</sup>

The final recommendation to close the Savanna Army Depot Activity was made after the BRAC commission analyzed these eight criteria and submitted their findings. The commission's analysis determined that through the closure of the Depot they could realign the power requirements, increase efficiencies, and permit the Army to manage a smaller munitions and equipment stockpile. One criteria used to achieve these results was to divide ammunition wholesale depots into three tiers. The first tier dealt with Active Core Depots, the second tier was for Cadre Depots, and the third tier was for Caretaker Depots. The Savanna Army Depot Activity was assigned to the third tier. The Caretaker Depots were installations which would have minimal staffs and store stocks no longer required until these were demilitarized or relocated. The Army plans to eliminate its stocks at these third tier sites no later than the year 2001.

The Army expected a rather substantial return on its investment from the BRAC recommendations. They determined that the total one-time cost to implement the plan would be \$38,000,000. In addition, the net of all costs and savings during the implementation period would be an estimated cost of \$12,000,000. The annual recurring savings after implementation would be \$13,000,000 with the return on investment expected in two years. Furthermore, the net value of the costs and savings over twenty years would be an estimated savings of \$112,000,000.<sup>5</sup>

The effect of the closing of the Savanna Depot was not fully known by May 1996. The cost of closing the Depot might have been underestimated in the BRAC commission's original report. The cost of transporting material out of Savanna might

cost millions of dollars more than estimated. In 1996, the Depot was shipping out material for use in different theaters of operation including Bosnia. It was thus ironic that war in theaters of operations such as Bosnia was helping to close down the Savanna Depot more quickly. One of the activities that had always been a point of pride at Savanna Depot -- support of United States troops abroad -- would in the third tier status hasten its demise.

Most of the economic effects of the closure of the Depot were felt by the downsizing of the personnel base. By 1996 the Depot directly employed only 450 people. The closing of the Depot would also eliminate 177 depot activity manpower positions. The final loss of these jobs would not be felt until the Depot ultimately closed its doors in 2001. Many of the employees of the Depot in 1996 were considering retirements (or would consider early retirement options if available) instead of job relocation according to Bill Robinson, a Depot employee.<sup>6</sup>

Because of the environmental effects of the Depot's activities over the years, serious clean-up efforts were in order. Many environmental projects had been completed in the 1990s. The United States Army Corps of Engineers was responsible for compiling a "Defense Environmental Restoration Program for Formerly Used Defense sites" prior to any possible closure of the base and any sale of the land and buildings. Cleaning up the soil and Mississippi backwaters would need to be completed as well as an extensive program to ensure that no live ammunition was buried in what was formerly the proving ground or burning ground areas.<sup>7</sup>

What would happen to the land and facilities at the Depot once the Army had phased out was a topic of public interest. A Depot Local Redevelopment Authority was established and would receive a portion of the 13,000 acres. The authority considered proposals for light and heavy industrial sites, a prison or juvenile detention facility following a boot camp format, an auto-racing track, a farming area, low-level radioactive waste disposal and incinerations. Many of the structures, their original life span expected to be completed by the turn of the century, would probably be torn down. On the other hand, there were quite a few buildings in suitable shape for continued use or which needed only slight modifications. The school buildings as well as some of the housing could be used for different purposes. Many of the storage magazines were falling apart and would need demolition but the expected life span of the Igloos would run well into 2041.

There were many different ideas for possible uses of the Depot and its land among the citizens of Carroll and Jo Davies counties. Portions of the land were scheduled to be turned over to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The organization Illinois Nature Conservancy urged that more of the land be preserved as an ecological area to bring back much of the native wildlife that were endangered. This would also allow for Mississippi River front recreational uses including camping.

Other interests saw the land as a prime real estate area for a number of different functions. Local farmers might be interested in purchasing the land for their own use. The area could be used for a residential development with large estates or divided into multiple sub-units. Large and small businesses could relocate to the area and a large business park could be built. The United States Army still has to clean up some environmental sites and move out before serious plans could be made for the re-utilization by private interests. What happened to the Depot was of serious concern for the community because it would effect them regardless of what was decided. The financial effects were only part of the considerations. Whatever happened to the Depot would effect the residents for years to come.<sup>8</sup>

Whatever the future might hold for the area, it is clear that the Savanna Ordnance Depot in its various formats has played an important part in the history of the Untied States and its military preparedness for eighty years, 1916-1996. On 14 May 1996 Major James Sisk, Commanding Officer of the Savanna Ordnance Depot Activity, dedicated a bronze plaque to commemorate that proud history. Former employees and current workers remembered the generations of civilian employees who served the Depot, often under adverse conditions. Major Sisk also recalled the contributions of the military personnel who served at the Depot in all the wars from World War I to the Bosnia intervention. Tom Robb, a civilian employee, summed up the feeling of many at the dedication ceremony. In the long run, he indicated, what was important to remember was not the 13,062 acres, the 923 buildings, the railroad tracks, or the unique Igloos -- it was the people who had served there.<sup>9</sup> This commemory history has also been a small part of the effort to preserve their story; hopefully more detailed research in the records might result in a more comprehensive history being written by future generations. For, in the end, what will remain after the Depot has formally closed will be the land, the people, and their memories.

### Endnotes for Postscript

1. Savanna Army Depot Activity, Savanna Army Depot (brochure, 1995), 6-7.
2. Carol Berkin, et. al. Making America: A History of the United States, annotated edition, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1995), 976, 986, 992, 1013-16, and 1018.
3. Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act (1990), Public Law 101-510, America on Line - Web Crawler, 23 November 1995, Congressional Reports on Military; Facts on File: 1995 (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1995), 22-23 June 1995, p. 467 G1, C2 and G2 and 28 February 1995, p. 230 G.Z.
4. Defense Realignment and Closure Commission, 1995 recommendation, America on Line - Web Crawler, 23 November 1995, Congressional Reports on Military.
5. Ibid; Facts on File: 1995, 13 July 1995, p. 520 B1 and Table, and 8 September 1995, p. 736 C2.
6. Interview with Bill Robinson, 1996. (Tapes of the Savanna project interviews were deposited with the History Department, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois.)
7. "Approximate Extent of Surface Ordnance Debris: Site 33," 26 June 1995 (xerox copy), Savanna Ordnance Depot Activity records.
8. Katie Schallert, "Savanna Depot to be preserve?", Rock Island Argus, 3 March 1996, pp. C1-C2.
9. Historical Marker Dedication Ceremony, 14 May 1996.

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**JAMES E. SISK  
Ordnance Corps  
Commanding  
May, 1996**